

Summary of Thesis submitted for
PhD degree

by Mark Clyde Hunter

on

The Political Economy of Anglo-American Naval Relations:
Pirates, Slavers and the Equatorial Atlantic, 1819 to 1863

This thesis analyses the decisions that affected Anglo-American naval relations from the Gulf of Mexico to the West African coast between 1819 and 1863. It places British and American naval deployment within the context of political and economic goals. The study reveals that Britain and the United States used sea power for commerce protection, but also believed that it could be used to further long-term economic goals. However, the different ways in which Britain and the United States used sea power affected Anglo-American diplomatic and naval relations. In Britain, the government and commercial sectors were unified in their belief that sea power could be used for commerce protection and to push African factors of production into legitimate commerce. In the United States, the government only reached a consensus that sea power could be used, during peacetime, for commerce protection and promotion. When these goals of the nations conflicted, tensions increased as their interests clashed.

America abhorred a strong military, but deployed naval force to fight piracy. But Britain combined slave trade suppression with economic policy and wanted American help along the West African coast. The Americans expanded their West African presence from occasional warships diverted from West Indian piracy patrols, to a full squadron, but focussed only on economic goals. These differences strained relations, but their common belief that they could use sea power for long-term commercial objectives in peacetime, provided the nations with a common mechanism through which the accumulated tensions could be mitigated. Naval forces in the equatorial Atlantic were rearranged and offending officers and ships withdrawn, to preserve Anglo-American relations. Anglo-American naval relations in the equatorial Atlantic reveal that the nations were neither friends, nor enemies, but sought to contain their disputes so they could further their individual policy objectives that would be harmed by a war.

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The Political Economy of Anglo-American Naval Relations:
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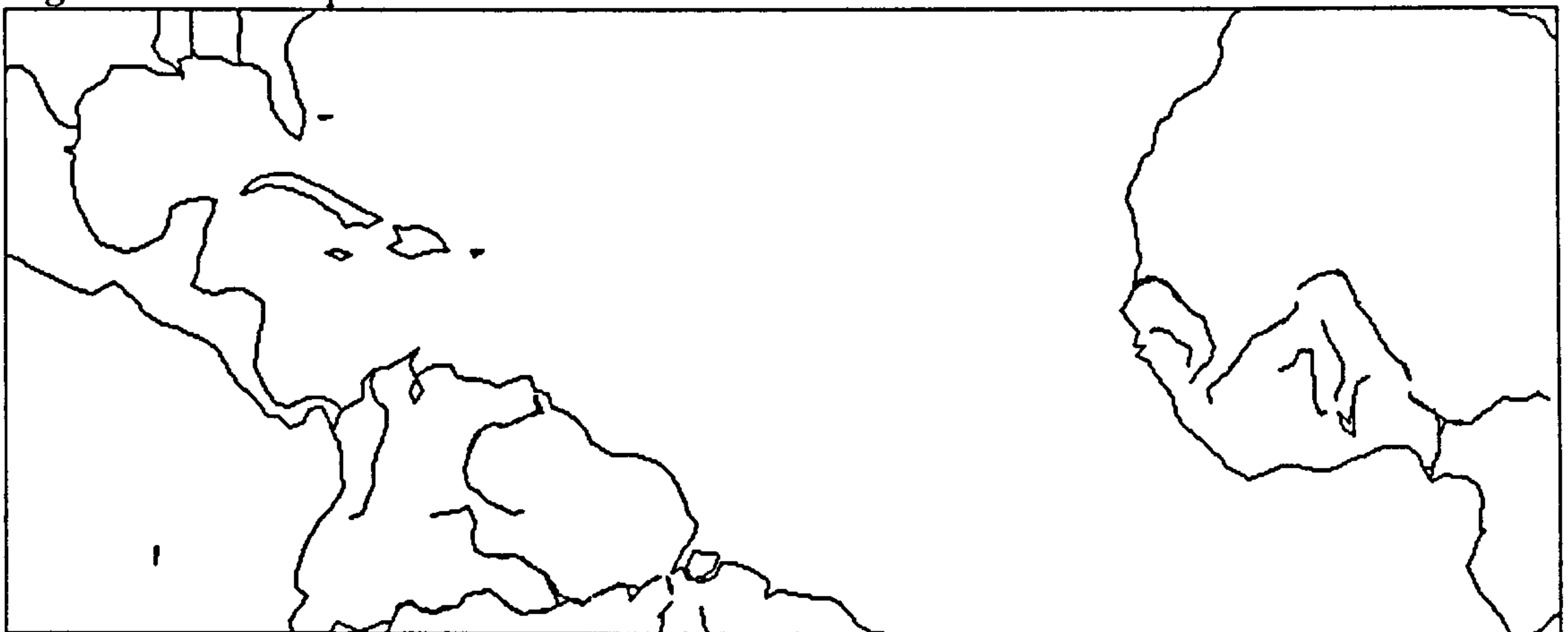
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Chapter One: Introduction

In the early nineteenth century, Britain and the United States were part of an Atlantic economic matrix. They both had interests in the equatorial Atlantic, a region that embraces the coastal zones of the Gulf of Mexico, Central America, Northern Brazil, and, across the Atlantic, the African coast from the Cape Verde Islands to South of the Congo River. This investigation will focus on the efforts of Britain and the United States to suppress piracy and the slave trade in this region between 1819 and 1863. It will show that they used sea power to attain these objectives, though the degree to which it was applied, and the nature of its application, varied according to wider political, diplomatic and strategic considerations. In essence, Anglo-American naval relations in this theatre not only served as a barometer of the vacillating relationship between the states, but also acted as a safety valve that could be adjusted to alleviate tension when conflicting policies threatened the peace that prevailed, sometimes precariously, between them.

Figure 1.1 The Equatorial Atlantic



Source: *AGIS 1.62: A GIS for Windows* (Franklin, Tasmania, Australia: AGIS Software, 1999).

Andrew Lambert opined that naval relations reflected Anglo-French rivalry. He concluded that this was “the mechanism whereby Britain and France clarified their

relationship; France challenged British maritime supremacy, and Britain responded.”¹ This hypothesis, which has it that naval relations are an important cog in the broader diplomatic wheel, will be tested in this study in the context of Anglo-American diplomacy. The examination will elucidate the extent to which the interests, diplomatic and naval relations of the two states interacted.

This study defines Anglo-American naval relations, during this era of relative peace, as the levels of co-operation and friction between naval powers. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, Britain and the United States often deployed their navies in the same regions. The American navy was divided into several squadrons: Mediterranean, Pacific, Home, South America, and Africa, as well as others when required, such as the West Indies squadron.² But American naval policy fluctuated with the interests and power of supporters and opponents.³ On the ocean, it encountered the larger Royal Navy. British policy-makers intended their fleet to meet the next two largest fleets, namely the French and Russian, but it also supported colonies and trade.⁴ In the Atlantic, the Royal Navy deployed to its North American and West Indies station, South East Coast of America, the Mediterranean and Africa.⁵ The compatibility and conflicts between each navy comprise the state of Anglo-American naval relations.

Economic interests shape political decisions, but also naval relations. In this period, the extent of the unity of the interests of the government and business class, in each nation, dictated naval policy. In Britain, the government and business class were

¹ Andrew Lambert, “Politics, Technology and Policy-Making, 1859-1865: Palmerston, Gladstone and the Management of the Ironclad Naval Race,” *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord*, 8:3 (July 1998): 13.

² United States, *Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1820-1860.

³ John H. Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire: The Commercial and Diplomatic Role of the American Navy, 1829-1861* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 3-18 and 37-41 and Craig L. Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists: The Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785-1827* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1980), 11-19.

⁴ C. J. Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 1-2, 34, and 125-128.

⁵ Britain, Public Record Office (PRO), Navy List, 1820-1861.

connected and unified in their goal to protect and promote trade. They agreed to avoid conflict with other nation-states, but that they could use sea power against those who threatened legitimate commerce. To those ends, the political elite determined that commercial growth in the equatorial Atlantic would only occur if they pushed factors of production away from the slave trade and into legitimate commerce with naval force. But in the United States, because of the power of domestic slavery interests, the government only reached a consensus on commerce protection, conflict avoidance, and the peaceful development of trade. The connection between slave trade suppression and commercial growth was a forbidden topic. The difference between the political economy of British and American naval deployment caused tensions in the equatorial Atlantic, but the similarity – maintaining peace while advancing economic objectives – created a common peacetime concept of sea power that allowed their naval relations to be a path through which Britain and America avoided conflict with each other.

During the war against pirates, both nations sought commerce protection. However, Britain was wary that forceful action against pirates and Spanish privateers would drag in other European powers before British commercial objectives were met. The British were suspicious that the American deployment was a prelude to seize Cuba, but the Royal Navy avoided overt espionage on American activity, knowing it might harm Anglo-American relations. Consequently, naval actions were adjusted to prevent conflicts with other nations and from becoming embroiled in the Spanish-American rebellions. When the piracy crisis ended, the Americans retrenched, leaving the Royal Navy the dominant force in the Atlantic.

But Britain also wanted the United States to police the slave trade. As part of the anti-piracy patrol, Washington dispatched vessels to the West African coast. They protected trade and provided assistance to American colonies. With post-crisis retrenchment, Britain wondered when the American efforts might resume. In response, Britain adhered to a liberal philosophy, lobbied other nations to suppress the slave trade, but avoided war over the issue. Still, the Royal Navy stopped suspected American-

flagged slavers, which increased Anglo-American tensions. Nevertheless, because both nations believed that sea power could foster long-term goals peacefully, both concluded that they could advance their different interests without battling each other.

Under the terms of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty (1842), the US deployed a squadron to West Africa, hoping it would eliminate the need for the Royal Navy to stop US-flagged ships. Still, Britain and America continued to have separate objectives that interfered with each other and raised tensions, in particular when they touched closer to American shores. Only Britain combined slave trade suppression with commerce protection, expansion, and strategic concerns; America believed they were separate issues. The contradiction generated tension between the nations. Regardless, both reined in their officers when they caused offence; navies policed the “peace,” but left serious disputes to the diplomats. Instead, their naval relations were a conduit through which they could reduce conflict. The mechanism reveals that in the Anglo-American relationship, they were neither friends, nor enemies, but they worked to reconcile their differences so they could further their separate objectives.

Anglo-American Relations Studies

This thesis deals with international relations and the use of sea power in support of national interests. Previous studies have failed to offer significant comparative insight into piracy, slave trade suppression, and Anglo-American relations during this period (see Appendix: Piracy and Slave Trade Studies). Consequently, the investigation will place the use of sea power within the broader context of Anglo-American relations, a field that studies how Anglo-American interests converge and clash. To bridge the gap between naval history and Anglo-American relations, I will use an “interest theory” of naval analysis. Influenced by the so-called “New Naval History,” this study will show how national interests, moulded by domestic and international commercial goals and political decisions, shaped naval relations. It will accomplish its objectives using a

comparative methodology applied to policy, diplomatic and naval documents, in the context of those interests and the equatorial Atlantic.

This study's objectives lie in the historiography of Anglo-American relations in the wake of the War of 1812. The conflict focussed on American commercial and maritime rights, and the nation's relationship with Britain. Meanwhile, nations who believed in exclusive trade between colonies and the mother country governed the world. Mercantilist practices excluded the United States from British colonies in the West Indies, with whom New England had a lucrative trade before the Revolutionary War. Under the "Rule of 1756," the British declared that mercantilist doctrine also applied in war. If a nation, like France, allowed only its vessels to carry trade between a colony and France during peace, the same had to occur in war.⁶ Consequently, an undercurrent of tension strained Anglo-American relations.

Tensions increased during the Anglo-French wars. Under the "Rule of 1756," Britain stopped American vessels from trading with France. Furthermore, the British practised impressment – searching any vessel for British subjects to press into service of the Royal Navy.⁷ Americans were divided on the best approach to take with Britain. The Federalists increased national defence, but "pursued a pro-British foreign policy abroad" to preserve peace and promote trade. Federalists, with supporters largely from the North, believed that war was too risky; Republicans took a harder line to promote American rights. Nevertheless, talks to resolve the disputes with Britain failed, and the Republican administration of James Madison declared war on Britain in 1812.⁸ During

⁶ Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations to 1913* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2002), 70-71 and Julius W. Pratt, *A History of United States Foreign Policy*, 2nd Edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 40 and 57-58.

⁷ Scott Thomas Jackson, "Impressment and Anglo-American Discord, 1787-1818" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1976), 17-55 and 56-90 contains discussion of British manning problems, impressment, American commerce, and the degeneration of Anglo-American relations that led to the War of 1812. See also, Kevin A. Payne, "Naval Impressment in Hull, 1793-1815" (MA diss., University of Hull, 1998).

⁸ American domestic and international affairs formed a nexus with the War of 1812. Madison and the Republicans hoped to confirm American independence and unite their party. Donald R. Hickey concluded that "many Republicans had come to believe that the rewards of war outweighed its risks"

peace talks, Washington wanted the British to abandon impressment, the “Rule of 1756,” and to define rules for blockade. But on land and sea, each win by one side was met by the other. When Britain defeated Napoleon, the Americans lost an advantage; still, the Duke of Wellington advised peace rather a long war that would further harm Britain’s finances. Rather than resolve the outstanding issues between them, both nations accepted a *status quo ante bellum* codified in the Treaty of Ghent. They restored seized territory and established joint commissions to settle boundary disputes.⁹ They also agreed to discuss the future of slave trade suppression.¹⁰ Howard Jones concluded that the “treaty was ultimately an armistice by two countries that finally realized their best interests lay in peace.”¹¹ But the US Navy had held its own against the Royal Navy, and “[a]fter 1812 the British took America seriously as a naval power[.]”¹²

The historiography of Anglo-American relations has therefore sought to understand the nature of the *status quo ante bellum*. But historians differ on when the Anglo-American “special relationship” developed. Most studies have been published in the wake of important events: World War II; the height of the Cold War; and the 200th anniversary of American independence. The field functions along a continuum where, at one pole, after the Revolutionary War, Britain and America were friendly and disputes were aberrations that had to be resolved. At the other limit, the nations were enemies who only recently became friends as common threats, like Germany and Soviet Russia, threatened them both. Within this context, historians disagree on the role of the Anglo-

(Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* [Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989], 5-8, 26-28, 46-47, 102, and 162-164).

⁹ H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1954), 336-345; Pratt, *United States Foreign Policy*, 66-67; and Hickey, *War of 1812*, 281-299.

¹⁰ W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1683-1870* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965), 133-135.

¹¹ Jones, *Crucible of Power*, 84.

¹² Andrew Lambert, *War at Sea in the Age of Sail 1650-1850* (London: Cassell & Co., 2000), 202; see also pp. 190-202 for details of the major naval battles of the War of 1812.

American economic relationship in this diplomatic relationship. Several significant works are illustrative of the trend in the field.

H.C. Allen, the elder statesman of the field, believed (1954) that Britain and America were only friends by World War II. Their prior relations were tense, almost going to war on several occasions such as during the Venezuela boundary dispute in 1895. He placed the emphasis on the United States for causing the problems in the relationship. Most disputes were territorial, within North America, pressing more on American sensitivities than British. Others involved maritime rights issues, ranging from access to Atlantic fisheries zones and the Navigation Acts. But in London, the parent had the maturity necessary, Allen believed, to be aware of its prior faults and to avoid “future dangers[.]”¹³

Nevertheless, Allen also placed emphasis on the growing Anglo-American economic connection in their relationship. Early in the relationship, America was dependent on Britain as a major creditor. The economic dynamic created tensions, but during the nineteenth century, it maintained their connection “no matter how much she [America] disliked to admit it.”¹⁴ Charles S. Campbell (1957) agrees with Allen’s general assessment, and concluded that the Anglo-American relationship was hostile until Britain wanted America’s help with China and Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁵ Kenneth Bourne (1967) also believed that Anglo-American friendship came late. After the War of 1812, some people promoted the benefits of trade, but others like John Quincy Adams believed that the nations conducted a “warfare of the mind.”¹⁶

¹³ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 2 and 17.

¹⁴ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 54 and 92-94.

¹⁵ Charles S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), 1-24 and 346-347.

¹⁶ Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (London: Longmans, 1967), 3-10.

At the other end of the spectrum, Frank Thistlethwaite (1959) believed that their economic relationship united the countries closer “than any two other sovereign states.”¹⁷ Thistlethwaite believed that factors of production flowed from Britain to America, providing the latter with needed capital and people for its growth. The nations became linked; Britain most closely with the Northeast American coast as its power grew over the South. People like Jeremiah Thompson brought New York and Liverpool together in the cotton and cloth trade. British banking houses provided credit for growing American canals and railways, for example the Baltimore and Ohio and the Camden and Amboy lines. Americans opened their interior and British bankers provided the needed fiscal experience.¹⁸

There were ripples in the economic relationship that affected wider Anglo-American relations. When recession hit in 1839, Jacksonians attacked “the sinister influence of British bankers; and the shock in London caused by the defaulting on their bonds by great American States ... induced a classic case of Anglo-American friction[.]” But the Atlantic economy recovered in the 1850s, and with it, Thistlethwaite opined, Anglo-American relations.¹⁹ He concluded that the economic relationship “supported a structure of social relations” that “bound together important elements in Britain and the United States” such as Quakers, Utilitarian MPs, trades unions, Christian and peace groups, abolitionists and women’s suffrage movements.²⁰ But the connection was with reformers and the rising Northern industrial class. Therefore, Britain was unable to exert influence over all Americans and overcome severe diplomatic crises such as resulted in the War of 1812.²¹

¹⁷ Frank Thistlethwaite, *The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 3-4.

¹⁸ Thistlethwaite, *Anglo-American Connection*, 9-18.

¹⁹ Thistlethwaite, *Anglo-American Connection*, 18-34.

²⁰ Thistlethwaite, *Anglo-American Connection*, 39-70 and 85-133.

²¹ Thistlethwaite, *Anglo-American Connection*, 172-175.

H.G. Nicholas (1963 and 1975), meanwhile, believed that the Anglo-American relationship changed with the evolving “power ratio,” but also agreed that war became less likely because of their civilian connections.²² Campbell (1974) conceded that diplomacy kept the nations from going to war after 1815, while their economic and cultural connections fertilised their friendship.²³ Martin Crawford (1987), however, believed that common Anglo-American ties helped the nations settle disputes *with* diplomacy, while newspapers like *The Times*, were lines of communications.²⁴ Historians have offered a range of opinions on the status of the Anglo-American relationship. But Lionel M. Gelber, writing before and after the Second World War, believed that the nations came together if it suited their individual interests, rather than for altruistic motivations.

He concluded (1938) that the American Revolution swayed the United States away from Britain. The War of 1812 and the Civil War reinforced the hostile American attitude. But by the late nineteenth century, when Anglo-American interests overlapped and they faced a common threat, the relationship became friendly. He concluded that after the Spanish-American War, stability was important and “Britain could begin to consider the United States an associated part of her defensive system” as the German threat increased. Britain and America, Gelber opined, would be wise to maintain their friendship with the rise of totalitarian Germany and Russia. After the war, he concluded (1961), that Britain owed its protection to America during the Cold War. Historically,

²² H.G. Nicholas, *Britain and the United States* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), 11-31 and 166-180. Nicholas refined his argument that trade promoted friendly relations, in *The United States and Britain* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1975), for example see Chapters 1-3.

²³ Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 1-8 and 191-204. Marshall Bertram, in *The Birth of Anglo-American Friendship: The Prime Facet of the Venezuelan Boundary Dispute: A Study of the Interreaction of Diplomacy and Public Opinion* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992) supported Campbell's conclusions but believed that newspapers and public opinion unified the relationship (for example, see his chapter 1).

²⁴ Martin Crawford, *The Anglo-American Crisis of the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Times and America, 1850-1862* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1987), ix and 1-14.

their relationship sometimes clashed, but rather than go to war, it had “long exhibited a dialectical process” and policies were reconciled for the “common” interest.²⁵

The “special relationship,” advanced by some historians of Anglo-American relations, was virtually non-existent from 1819-1863. There were unresolved disputes, such as the right of search, that led British and American interests to clash on the high seas, in particular over slave trade suppression. Anglo-American naval relations in the equatorial Atlantic provide new insight into the dynamic of the Anglo-American relationship. During this period, it was analogous to that theorised by Gelber. They tried to reconcile their differences and avoid war. But co-operation was illusory as they modified their naval policies, furthered objectives, and reduced or limited tensions. Anglo-American naval relations in the equatorial Atlantic reveal that Britain and the United States were neither friends nor enemies. The smallest dispute could spark the potential of unwanted war while they sought to further their separate national interests using sea power. But their naval relations became a device through which they could accommodate each other, while maintaining their separate positions.

The historiography of Anglo-American relations shows that their relations often revolved around economic, maritime, and trade issues. Consequently, an analysis of their naval relations surrounding piracy and slave trade suppression in the equatorial Atlantic is an important measurement of the dynamics of their connection. This study will show that a dialectic existed between their naval and diplomatic relations in the early nineteenth century. Between 1819 and 1863, Britain and the United States remained wary that war might erupt between them over unresolved issues. But the analysis will show that while tensions remained, they worked to keep them from spiralling out of control. They modified their maritime policies to accommodate each

²⁵ Lionel M. Gelber, *The Rise of Anglo-American Friendship: A Study in World Politics, 1898-1906* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 1-17, 31-36, and 274-275 and Gelber, *America in Britain's Place: The Leadership of the West and Anglo-American Unity* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), 1-16. Although largely a textbook, David H. Burton, in *British-American Diplomacy 1895-1917: Early Years of the Special Relationship* (Malabar, FL: Kroeger Publishing Company, 1999)

other while fighting piracy, the slave trade, and adhering to their wider domestic and international objectives.

Naval History

Naval historians have often dealt with sea power in support of national interests. Alfred Thayer Mahan is considered the father of naval history, but it has a broader foundation. It can be traced to John Knox Laughton. Laughton, a Cambridge trained mathematician, entered the Royal Navy in 1853 as an instructor. Cambridge instilled in him a rigorous scientific ethic that Andrew Lambert concluded he retained “for the rest of his life.” Laughton applied scientific method to his work on oceanic meteorology; collecting data to test an hypothesis, and then applied the same approach to naval history, advocating others do the same. Laughton understood that naval history was a part of international and domestic history, and contributed to the “understanding of those wider pictures.”²⁶

Laughton hoped to develop a “new doctrine for the ironclad era” and conceived some important concepts. For example, studying (1873) naval tactics for the period 1794-1805, he concluded that an enemy could meet their objectives “by avoiding decisive action” and creating “strategic defeats” for their enemies. Force concentration and skill were important to achieve true victories. Consequently, strategic plans “had to be developed that would *force* [emphasis in original] a reluctant enemy to fight[.]”²⁷ Laughton’s concepts and scientific methodology influenced other naval historians like Sir Julian Corbett, Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, and Mahan.

Laughton recruited Corbett into the Navy Records Society, and suggested he study the Spanish War of 1585-87. Using an archive-based approach, Corbett moved into strategic studies and found in Clausewitz “a theoretical structure that could contain,

observed similarly that World War One showed that “national self-interest need not be divisive” (Burton, 6).

²⁶ Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy and the Historical Profession* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1998), 11-17, 25 and 47.

²⁷ Lambert, *Foundations*, 44-47.

develop and elucidate the strong strategic and doctrinal framework provided by Laughton.”²⁸ Laughton also influenced Richmond, when the former passed along projects. Richmond, like Laughton used “academic study as the foundation for national strategy” and stressed “that naval operations merely formed a part of strategy[.]”²⁹ In the United States, Mahan concluded that great battles between naval powers often decided history. He looked to the past to find the elements of sea power that made a nation great: its geography, natural resources, population, and the character of the people and government.³⁰ Mahan acknowledged Laughton’s influence, and the latter was pleased that Mahan’s work was “history teaching by examples[.]”³¹ Lambert concluded that they learned from each other and shared a belief in “the importance of history in demonstrating the central role of naval power in national policy.”³²

Laughton’s lasting influence was methodological. Richmond, on Corbett’s death, wrote that “history is the raw material out of which a knowledge of the principles of strategy and tactics is built[.]”³³ Several authorities on British and American naval history are relevant to this study because they have focused on the use of sea power in the national interest, while using historical methodology.³⁴ In the polemical strain, for

²⁸ Lambert, *Foundations*, 157 and 224-225.

²⁹ Lambert, *Foundations*, 195-197 and 221.

³⁰ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1805* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 30-33. This work is a one-volume edition of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* and *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812*. Mahan also wrote other works, for example, a biography, *The Life of Nelson: The Embodiment of Sea Power of Great Britain* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1899). He expressed his theory of history skilfully in “Subordination in Historical Treatment,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1902* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903). For more on the influences on Mahan’s theories see Thomas R. Pollock, “The Historical Elements of Mahanian Doctrine,” *Naval War College Review*, 35:4 (1982): 44-49.

³¹ Lambert, *Foundations*, 127.

³² Lambert, *Foundations*, 126-130.

³³ Richmond in Lambert, *Foundations*, 220.

³⁴ Mahan cautioned that there were other factors than the role of sea power in establishing a great nation, a warning that most naval historians have ignored. See Paul Kennedy, “The Influence and the Limitations of Sea Power,” *The International History Review*, 10:1 (February 1988): 2-17.

example, Harold and Margaret Sprout (1939) intended their study of American sea power as a warning to the United States to remain prepared for war. The Battle of Yorktown, during the Revolutionary War, led to the capture of Cornwallis and, according to the Sprouts, the eventual defeat of the British. In a similar style, other historians, like Craig L. Symonds (1980), have focussed on the “character of the people and government” in Mahan’s paradigm, and the continual battle between American ocean and land interests – the navalists and antinavalists.³⁵

But other historians, in the tradition of the historical academy, have taken a broader approach to assess how sea power was used in support of national interests and what it may reveal about international relations. Richmond believed that armed force “constitutes a weapon which defends some vital interest” and nations with overseas interests developed a fleet that was “a flexible instrument, apt to the needs of the country[.]”³⁶ Sea power developed because of “spontaneous economic or social movements” and overseas development. Other nations, not dependent on the sea, also strove for sea power to acquire territory or trade “for the added wealth and strength and influence which it would confer[.]” As nations grew economically, rivalries occurred that spawned the desire for greater sea power. He believed that the “need for security of an interest upon which the life and fortunes of the peoples depended brought it [sea power] into existence[.]” The English, for instance, developed sea power when their interests became “more widely diffused, [and] contact, and consequently the possibility of friction, with states far removed from the Channel” became more likely.³⁷

While Richmond (1934) focused on the broad need for sea power, C.J. Bartlett (1963) concentrated on policy development. He believed that strong individuals, like Lord Palmerston, were important in moulding naval policy. But Bartlett also postulated

³⁵ Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power 1776-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), 7-12 and Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists*, 11-12.

³⁶ Herbert Richmond, *Sea Power in the Modern World* (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1934), 5-6.

³⁷ Richmond, *Sea Power in the Modern World*, 16-35.

that economics and the “triangular struggle” of naval, foreign, and domestic affairs also played a role.³⁸ Andrew Lambert showed that British naval development met threats from rivals, like France. When the threat declined in the 1860s, calls from navalists like Sir Baldwin Walker for more iron warships were met with economising through smaller vessels. But leaders like Aberdeen had also used the navy as instruments of diplomacy, “[i]n the Mediterranean he called for two less battleships than the French, to salve their wounded pride[.]”³⁹

Interest-Based Naval Analysis

Mahan has influenced the development of naval history, but others also advanced the field. From Laughton, Mahan, Richmond and others, there has been continuity in naval history, but also historical rigour to understand the influence of broader factors on naval affairs. Recent maritime and naval historians have advocated a renewed systematic approach to naval history that also takes into consideration more than just battles, tactics, and the great commanders’ role in war. One aspect of “New Naval History” is to link naval affairs and wider history. John B. Hattendorf wrote that naval power was one way nations implemented national policy. Therefore, he opined, naval historians must acknowledge the interconnectedness of traditional naval topics and broader national contexts to understand navies and their use.⁴⁰

An interest-based approach to naval history allows for a broader analysis than a focus solely based on battles and tactics. In turn, this reveals the dynamics of policy formulation, and the relationship between sea power and international relations. Like Bartlett, Paul Kennedy believed that broader variables had to be used to understand the

³⁸ Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power*, 101-102 and 104.

³⁹ Andrew Lambert, *Battleships in Transition: The Creation of the Steam Battlefleet 1815-1860* (Oxford: The Alden Press, 1984), 13-19, 83-85 and 117-118 and Lambert, *The Last Sailing Battlefleet: Maintaining Naval Mastery, 1815-1850* (London: Conway Maritime Press, Ltd., 1991), 39.

⁴⁰ John B. Hattendorf, (ed.), *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1995), 1-4.

development of British naval policy. He believed that notions of “naval mastery” and “sea power” could only be understood by analysing “national, international, economic, political and strategical considerations[.]”⁴¹ But how did nations use navies in support of national interests, short of war? Corbett recognised, while discussing war, that national policies influenced naval deployment and even small navies could be used to implement national policies in localised areas without achieving complete command of the sea.⁴² Meanwhile, Lambert revealed in his study of the Crimean War, for example, that the Royal Navy could influence Russian strategy without drawing the Russian Navy into battle.⁴³ The nature of the interests shapes the level of naval involvement in implementing national policy. This study will reveal this is particularly true in an era of relative peace. Therefore, an “interest theory” school of naval relations is important.

Late twentieth century naval strategists have articulated an “interest” theory of naval strategy further. A speaker at the Adderbury Maritime Strategic Dialogue concluded that “[m]aritime forces are particularly useful for interest-based strategies” and the interests of two sides might “only clash at certain points.”⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Jan Glete theorised that forces like the navy acted “as instruments for a state in accordance with the demands of the interest base behind that state[.]” Glete postulated an “interest

⁴¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1976), xv-xvii, 24-27 and 98-110.

⁴² Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (New York, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911, reprint New York: AMS Press, 1972), 1-9, 14-27, 87 and 100-101. For more on Corbett and Richmond see James Goldrick and John B. Hattendorf, (eds.), *Mahan is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1993) in particular, Hattendorf, “Mahan Is Not Enough: Conference Themes and Issues,” 7-12; Daniel A. Baugh, “Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond and the Objects of Sea Power,” 13-38; and Donald M. Schurman, “Julian Corbett’s Influence on the Royal Navy’s Perception of its Maritime Function,” 51-63.

⁴³ Andrew D. Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy, 1853-56* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 169 and 293. But Basil Greenhill cautioned that British officers, like Keppel, were looking for a battle with the Russian fleet, unaware that the Royal Navy had defeated the Russian navy’s Baltic squadron by “simply being there” (Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, *The British Assault on Finland, 1854-1855: A Forgotten Naval War* [Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988], 289-291).

⁴⁴ Eric Grove, *Maritime Strategy and European Security. Common Security Studies No. 2* (London: Brassey’s, 1990), 140.

aggregation” of those willing to “cede their right of using violence[.]” Consequently, while the state acted “as an economic coordinator of resources brought or extracted from the society[.]” nineteenth century “Euro-American cruiser forces” became the “chief instrument of violence control” according to interest demands.⁴⁵

To such ends, piracy and the slave trade involved both the United States and Britain, and their domestic and international interests, within the same zone. This study will reveal that Britain and the United States, in support of the “interest aggregation,” exerted regional influence to further their national interests, while avoiding war, during their actions against piracy and the slave trade. Yet, piracy and slave trade suppression studies have largely ignored issues of international relations and naval policy (see Appendix: Piracy and Slave Trade Studies). An analysis that compares and contrasts British and American efforts to suppress piracy and the slave trade provides a significant indication of the role of sea power to support national interests and what it reveals about Anglo-American relations. Their use of sea power allowed the nations to relate with one another and mitigate potential conflicts.

This thesis will argue that Britain and the United States reacted differently to piracy and the slave trade, depending on their national interest aggregation, as each sought to protect and promote commerce and further wider objectives. Consequently, their different reactions and national interests shaped their naval deployment and relations. Divergent goals and strategies often interfered with each other and generated Anglo-American tension. But their underlying policies moulded their use of sea power for “peaceful” purposes; conflict avoidance with each other while furthering economic goals. Rather than go to war, the nations sought a conciliatory approach to their conflicting naval policies. The analysis is significant because it adds to the field of Anglo-American relations studies to show that Britain and America accommodated each other in the equatorial Atlantic to reduce tensions and the chance of war.

⁴⁵ Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860*. 2 vols. (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1993), 400, 477-482 and 486.

Comparative Methodology and Sources

This study will offer a deeper understanding of the role of sea power, international and naval relations, and the suppression of piracy and the slave trade. To correct the inconsistencies and oversights of prior piracy and slave trade suppression studies (see Appendix: Piracy and Slave Trade Studies), it will use a comparative methodology. Dennis E. Showalter concluded that naval history must address “systematically and comparatively the problem of choice in state policy, strategic planning, and force structures” to create “a ‘new naval history.’ ”⁴⁶ In 1995, Paul G. Halpern wrote that comparative naval history could compare and contrast the operations of two or more navies or geographic regions. Sources and methods similar to non-naval studies could be used: first person accounts, official records, and records from “the enemy” covering the same event. Using such a technique, this study will attempt to satisfy William R. Thompson’s suggestion that naval historians ask explicit questions and make explicit comparisons.⁴⁷

By comparing Anglo-American interests, policy formulation, and its impact on shaping naval deployment and co-operation, important insight will be gained into the circumstances under which Britain and the United States used sea power and co-operated. To link elements of naval history, the sources used to assess how piracy and slave trade suppression reflected national interests and Anglo-American relations comprised several groups. These included newspapers; policy, diplomatic, and naval documents; and economic and naval statistics. British and American sources are often

⁴⁶ Dennis E. Showalter, “Toward a ‘New’ Naval History,” in Hattendorf, (ed.), *Doing Naval History*, 138.

⁴⁷ Paul G. Halpern, “Comparative Naval History,” and William R. Thompson, “Some Mild and Radical Observations on Desiderata in Comparative Naval History,” in Hattendorf, (ed.), *Doing Naval History*, 75-114. Several other authors have written works of comparative naval history. For example, Clark G. Reynolds, in *Command of the Sea: The History and Strategy of Maritime Empires* (London: Robert Hale & Company, 1976) sought to “discover the strategic alternatives and constants governing navies and empires throughout the continuum of history by raising hypotheses to be tested by historical examination” (Reynolds, xv-xvi) Meanwhile, George Modelski and William R. Thompson, in *Seapower in Global Politics, 1494-1993* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988) used aggregate ship counting to track “fluctuations in the concentration of global reach[.]” (Modelski and Thompson, *Seapower*, 27-97).

interlocking and complementary. But each type of source has limitations and advantages.

People, for example, often have agendas, while reporters can embellish stories while telling horrific tales of piracy. Nevertheless, newspapers accounts are important because they reveal what the public was being exposed to regarding an issue. The historian can use documents from the policy making, diplomatic, and naval deployment levels to fill in the details for an analysis. But these sources also contain personal or nationalistic bias while only officially sanctioned records are often published. Meanwhile, all sources contain gaps and the researcher can only use those that survive. Consequently, a comparative methodology, using similar sources for two countries, can increase the accuracy and reliability of the analysis. Halpern advocated a “mirror technique.” Record gaps can be filled and biases reduced by looking in the archives of opposing governments, departments and navies.⁴⁸

Used comparatively, British and American sources allow the dynamics of the Anglo-American relationship to be analysed at various levels. For example, newspapers like the *American Commercial and Daily Advertiser* and *The New York Times* provided “real-time” details of events and the opinions of interest groups. The *Annals of Congress* and the *Congressional Globe* provided information about congressional opinion, including petitions requesting support for African endeavours. Additionally, documents contained in National Archives (NA), Record Group (RG) 45, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Records of the Secretary of the Navy, contained correspondence from American merchants and other parties interested in matters relating to piracy, slave trade suppression, African colonisation, and trade.

Several American sources were then used to analyse American decision making. Among them, the memoirs of John Quincy Adams revealed White House policy

⁴⁸ Halpern, “Comparative Naval History,” in Hattendorf, (ed.), *Doing Naval History*, 81-91.

debates, in particular during President James Monroe's tenure. Adams' memoirs also provided his personal reflections on the decisions, in particular over the contentious issue of dispatching American naval forces to the West African coast. The papers of Secretary of State Daniel Webster were especially important in analysing the decisions made during the early 1840s, when the United States established a permanent West African force. The American sources reveal the ease with which leaders made decisions to police piracy, but how, at the same time, they found it hard to make decisions regarding the slave trade. The sources reveal the political, economic and geographic constraints on those decisions.

This study also examines the ramifications of the American political process on international relations and naval deployment. American dispatches from US ambassadors in Britain, contained in the General Records of the Department of State (RG 59), reveal the interface between the American and British positions, as did British Foreign Office and Admiralty documents. The *U.S. Serial Set* and Navy Department records contained at the National Archives divulged the opinions of naval officers and how political considerations shaped naval policy. American naval deployment was also examined using *Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy*, and sources contained in the Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Records of the Secretary of the Navy (RG 45), like Commodore Matthew Perry's letter books, the copious volumes of correspondence received by the Secretary of the Navy from squadron commanders, and the Secretary's "confidential" letters.

This study compares and contrasts American naval deployment, constraints and freedoms with their British counterparts. From the British perspective, one source for gathering information on diplomatic and naval relations, and naval deployment, were published *British Parliamentary Papers*, like the Irish University Press series, in particular the series on the slave trade. This well-indexed source contains British policy papers, diplomatic and naval correspondence, and statistics on slave trade seizures. Charles Webster warned that these "Blue Books" might be misleading. Lord Palmerston

admitted, for example, that he could withhold materials from Parliament. But he also realised that he depended on public opinion for support, deceiving them could backfire, thus he demanded that “[a]ll important negotiations had to be fully recorded in the public despatches[.]” Webster also concluded that diplomatic correspondence was a special case. If the government published false records, the offended government would know, for it would have a copy of the actual correspondence. Metternich, for example, was so concerned about the authenticity of “Blue Book” diplomatic correspondence that he often “withheld communications” because “they might be produced to Parliament.”⁴⁹

But to balance the possible biases in parliamentary records, this study also used American diplomatic records like dispatches from American ambassadors in London, to develop a truer picture of the diplomatic process. For key periods, such as during the piracy crisis and later tension with the United States over slave trade suppression and Central America, Admiralty (Adm) records were also consulted, including correspondence from the government and naval officers. For the critical 1840s, I also consulted the papers of Sir Charles Hotham, British commodore along West Africa, held by the Brynmor Jones Library Archives, University of Hull. Containing letters from the government, personal correspondence, and his general and secret dispatches, it painted a wider picture of British West African policy and how it fitted with larger geopolitical and strategic concerns. A pattern emerged in the totality of the documents that explained national policies and how naval and diplomatic relations interfaced with other objectives, while the nations sought to mitigate disputes between them.

British naval deployment shaped by their policies was investigated and given a wider perspective using various sources. In addition to the Hotham papers, during the earlier piracy crisis, Adm 2/1585-1589, Out-letters, showed British decisions. The logbooks of admirals like Sir Charles Rowley (Adm 50/136) and Jamaica station correspondence (Adm 1/273-275 and Adm 128/34), for example, revealed policy

⁴⁹ Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston 1830-1841: Britain, The Liberal Movement and the Eastern Question*. 2 vols. (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1951), vol. 1, 61-63.

ramifications in-theatre. Critical Foreign Office (FO) comments on West African policy are contained in FO 2/4, Africa and FO 84/775, Slave Trade Department. Meanwhile, policy directives issued during a period of Anglo-American tension in the Gulf of Mexico in 1858 are in Adm 1/5699, In-Letters, From Foreign Office, 1858. Important in comparing general Anglo-American naval relations was Adm 7/712, an Admiralty file on the US Navy. Finally, Royal Navy deployment in West Africa was examined using African station correspondence in Adm 123/164, Adm 123/167, Adm 123/173, and Adm 123/177.

These sources revealed the impact of policy on British naval deployment against pirates, its freedom against slavers off West Africa, and the problems the Royal Navy faced when Anglo-American interests clashed. Admiralty and US Navy Department sources, specific naval operations and the observations of one navy on the other, also helped assess the dynamic between Anglo-American relations and their use of sea power during this period. Finally, the influence of national interests on naval deployment in the Atlantic was followed statistically for the Royal Navy and US Navy with time series developed from *Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy* and Britain's *Navy List*. In addition, the accuracy of official slave trade observations was tested against a database on slaving voyages compiled by David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein.⁵⁰

This work intends to explain how Anglo-American naval policy was a tool in defining their relationship. Using the sources and methodology described, eight chapters and a conclusion divide this study. Chapter Two places British and American goals, and navies, within the context of their economic development, growing interests and relations in the equatorial Atlantic. Chapter Three and Four reveal that both nations worked toward a common policy during the Spanish American rebellions, but kept the

⁵⁰ David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Hereafter, Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*. Readers should note that, as this is a CD-ROM, citations will not contain page numbers. Results are generated through structured query language (SQL) calls to the database.

use of sea power to protecting commercial interests from pirate attacks. Unable to reach a consensus, both went their separate ways, while still fulfilling similar objectives. The chapters reveals the ease with which the United States deployed force to protect against pirates, while Britain was restrained by her commitments to the Concert of Europe. But Britain faced fewer constraints on the other side of the Atlantic against the slave trade. However, in that war, London was unable to convince the United States to co-operate against the slave trade. Instead, Washington deployed a minimal naval force to West Africa in hope of placating the British while supporting private colonisation efforts.

Chapter Five shows that by the 1840s, the American use of sea power included furthering strategic objectives overseas. It formed a nexus with British policy and allowed both nations to relate and avoid war. Their strategic view of the peaceful use of sea power allowed them to develop a common strategy for West Africa in hope of mitigating disputes. The United States deployed a permanent West African squadron to protect and promote commercial development and eliminate the need for Britain to stop US-flagged ships. Meanwhile, London believed the Royal Navy could suppress the slave trade and encourage legitimate commerce under the free trade banner. To emphasise differences in Anglo-American policy, Chapters Six and Seven analyse British and American naval policies off West Africa after 1842. They reveal that by the late 1850s, their differing goals continued to generate Anglo-American tension. But Chapter Eight explains that they modified their use of sea power to reduce tensions and safely move individual interests forward. Britain and the United States were neither friends nor enemies, but their concept for peacetime sea power was a mechanism through which the nations co-existed.

Chapter Two: The Atlantic Theatre

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars left the United States and Britain the major players in the Atlantic. The economic conditions in this region are significant because the policies and growth of Britain and the United States shaped their naval deployment and their relations. Their growing and often divergent goals created conditions that could increase Anglo-American tensions in regions of common interest, like the equatorial Atlantic. While Britain and the United States eyed each other with suspicion, the “interest aggregation” in both countries preferred peaceful development of objectives. The nations met on the “great common” in the West Indies and West Africa, two important regions for their emerging policies.

During times of crisis, Britain and the United States were wary of each other. But their adherence to using sea power peacefully, to protect and promote trade, provided them with a mechanism with which to relate without driving each other from the sea. In Britain, capitalists wanted peaceful growth and protection of overseas commerce. Therefore, political leaders avoided provoking naval rivals, like France and the United States, into combining to threaten British interests. Instead, London hoped to further economic goals through an emerging freer trade policy, conflict avoidance, and “peaceful” use of sea power. In the United States, while American leaders also felt that sea power could be used peacefully for a similar purpose, policies wavered as the nation struggled over continental or maritime expansion.

The Atlantic Theatre

During the early nineteenth century, Western Europe was the most developed region in the Atlantic with London the world financial centre. Table 2.1 and 2.2 show that Europe’s share of manufacturing output and levels of industrialisation grew, with Britain at the forefront. The United States lagged behind in terms of manufacturing output, only surpassing Britain in the early twentieth century, but it was growing. As

British and American industrial might and hunger for more markets and resources grew, they backed up control with mechanised firepower.¹

Table 2.1 Share of World Manufacturing Output, 1750-1900 (Percentage)

Country	1750	1800	1830	1860	1880	1900
Europe	23.2	28.1	34.2	53.2	61.3	62.0
(UK)	(1.9)	(4.3)	(9.5)	(19.9)	(22.9)	(18.5)
US	0.1	0.8	2.4	7.2	14.7	23.6
Third World	73.0	67.7	60.5	36.6	20.9	11.0
Other	3.7	3.4	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), table 6, 190.

Table 2.2 Levels of Industrialisation, 1750-1900

Country	1750	1800	1830	1860	1880	1900
Europe	8	8	11	16	24	35
UK	10	16	25	64	87	100
US	4	9	14	21	38	69

Source: Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, table 7, 190.
Note: UK = 100 in 1900.

Still, a balance of power strategy governed geopolitical relations in this world. European powers worked to prevent France’s aggressive rebirth and its relative share of power fell. Meanwhile, conservative attitudes, like those of Prince Metternich, played a part in British strategic thinking.² The continuance of the “rule of law,” or “legitimacy,” philosophy helped govern Britain’s foreign policy. Thus, Imlah concluded, the system maintained order in Europe and “helped to prevent [the] balance of power [strategy] from degenerating into mere competition for power.”³

¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), 183-193.

² Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 204-218; Modelski and Thompson, *Seapower*, 249-250 and 305; and Reynolds, *Command of the Sea*, 332.

³ Albert H. Imlah, *Economic Elements in the Pax Britannica: Studies in British Foreign Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 2-4.

The Gentlemanly Capitalists and British Strategy

In this context, Britain developed a free trade policy and political leaders grew to adhere to a liberal view of foreign relations that meant interference with other powers only if British interests were threatened. Early British trade policies constrained British naval objectives during the piracy crisis. As the former evolved, London felt it could work with other powers to achieve its economic goals while maintaining Britain's strategic commitments. Barry Gough concluded that "the term *Pax Britannica* ... encompasses the maintenance of order and stability in various regions of the world" for the peaceful development of British interests.⁴ This economic and diplomatic policy moulded Britain's use of sea power and her relations with the United States.

The political elite and London's financial centre, "The City," dominated British goals to further commercial development "peacefully." They were a cohesive group with similar backgrounds, while other groups lacked sufficient political power. The City, with its government connections, wished commerce increased and kept a freer trade imperative prominent. In the Western Atlantic, the British wanted access to Spanish markets, while checking the moves of other powers. Along West Africa, while radical free traders sought to disband the African squadron, the political elite dominated. This study will reveal that they would not let the other political groups stall their policy or drag them into war. Consequently, they sought to further their interests with sea power, and modified its use when it threatened relations with other nations, like the United States. As Gough surmised, for gentlemanly capitalists, "[a]mphibious diplomacy required a deft hand."⁵

Studies of the connection between the British financial and government sectors are nothing new; their connections and interests influenced the dynamics of British

⁴ Barry Gough, "Profit and Power: Informal Empire, the Navy and Latin America," in Raymond E. Dumett, (ed.), *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), 73.

⁵ Gough, "Profit and Power," 79.

foreign policy. Leaders like Lord Palmerston warned investors of those countries to avoid, while governments saw the advantage of British financial penetration into regions of British political interest.⁶ D.C.M. Platt commented that “[b]usinessmen, politicians, and officials shared their beliefs, social status, and general interests to such an extent that they acted together.” He reminded us that “Lenin wrote of ‘the “interlocking” of bankers, ministers, big industrialists and rentiers’[.]”⁷ But in the most succinct study of the phenomena, P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins concluded that the connection between the London financial sector and British policy makers provided The City with considerable influence at the Treasury, Colonial, and Foreign Office.⁸

Rooted in the British landed aristocracy, the English gentlemanly class held money made from physical labour and production “in low repute.” Instead, banking and finance, based at the City of London, appealed to them. Therein rose the famous banking families of the Barings, Rothschilds, and Grenfells. The City made money in acceptable ways, remained loyal to the traditional, governing class, and connected the gentlemanly capitalists and government officials. Both were educated for the elite at universities such as Oxford and Cambridge and held similar world views because of their “gentlemanly ethic[.]”⁹ They recognised “Britain’s status as an international service centre” rather than her “position as the world’s workshop.” And abroad, the gentlemen nurtured similar groups with whom they could deal.¹⁰

Cain and Hopkins concluded that the gentlemanly class linked economics and government policy. The ability of the government to pay high post-war debt worsened during the depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s. Therefore, expansion, co-

⁶ D.C.M. Platt, *Finance, Trade, and Politics in British Foreign Policy 1815-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 12, 18 and 25.

⁷ Platt, *Finance, Trade, and Politics*, 3-5 and 23.

⁸ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd Edition (London: Longmans, 2001), 120-121. This is a one-volume edition of Cain and Hopkins’ original *British Imperialism*.

⁹ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 38-43, 47 and 122.

¹⁰ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 48-51.

ordinated by The City, would increase trade and provide the government with increased revenues to meet its debt obligations. Decreased tariffs would increase foreign supplies of food for the growing British population, while providing British manufacturers with new markets.¹¹ The City was the world's creditor and financed the development of Europe and the United States. Increased world trade would be "handled, transported and insured by British firms." The gentlemanly capitalists saw empire as a "means of generating income" in acceptable ways, protected and promoted by the government.¹²

Tory and Whig ministries dominated early nineteenth century governments. Tories were concerned with stability and aristocratic ideals. Whigs held similar views, but also believed in gradual reform and had support from The City and rising manufacturing classes. Largely from the same class, British governments supported the gentlemanly view. Tories Lord Castlereagh and George Canning, for example, believed in developing trade links to Latin America.¹³ This connection, Cain and Hopkins concluded, also explains Palmerston's "aggressive imperialism during the severe depression of the 1830s and 1840s[.]" It was meant to expand British markets and keep the "lower" classes content and "at arm's length."¹⁴ Palmerston, a Whig, believed in free trade and was willing to impose it on "reluctant rulers, to evict recalcitrant ones, and to advance 'legitimate commerce' by putting down the slave trade." His philosophy was logical because "he inherited beliefs espoused by the gentlemanly elite[.]"¹⁵ The Royal Navy was a natural instrument to aid such "gentlemanly" interests, but at all levels London adhered to a liberal policy of minimal interference overseas.

¹¹ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 82-85.

¹² Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 55-57.

¹³ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 46-48 and 246.

¹⁴ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 52.

¹⁵ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 99.

During this period, with short exceptions as during the Conservative administrations of Sir Robert Peel, George Canning and Lord Palmerston dominated British foreign policy. Canning was Foreign Secretary from 1822 to 1827, when he briefly became Prime Minister before his death. Thereafter, with brief interruptions from 1830, Palmerston was Foreign Secretary, and then Prime Minister, until his death in 1865. But both men placed Britain's interests first.¹⁶ As will be discussed in Chapter Three, Canning wanted to placate other nations, but act at the best moment to secure British commercial interests.¹⁷ Palmerston followed in the tradition of Canning, but also held a liberal foreign policy philosophy; an "amalgam of progress and stability[.]"¹⁸

E.D. Steele concluded that Palmerston's use of force depended on the circumstances. He was willing to use force, for example, against Brazil, Japan, and China, but it was "not evident in his handling of relations with France and America[.]" The commercial and public sectors wanted peace and stability. They wanted Britain to play a part in Europe, but "they expected to enjoy [this] without a war ... [that] might jeopardize prosperity[.]"¹⁹ Consequently, Palmerston sought to use other states to counter larger powers. He used Turkey, for example, to counter Russia and supported the Greek independence movement. He realised that "France ... was the rival of Britain overseas and the greatest danger to British security." But rather than war, he believed that French power was better "checked by cooperation[.]"²⁰ Britain adhered to a liberal philosophy, protected its merchants from physical harm, and promoted economic

¹⁶ M.E. Chamberlain, "Reading History: New Light on British Foreign Policy," *History Today*, 1985, 35 (July): 45-48.

¹⁷ Harold Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning, 1822-1827: England, the Neo-Holy Alliance, and the New World*, 2nd Edition (London and Edinburgh: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., reprint 1966), 42-45 and 447-475.

¹⁸ Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 29-32.

¹⁹ E.D. Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism, 1855-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5 and 8.

²⁰ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, vol. 2, 784-786 and 792.

growth, but maintained a *laissez-faire* mentality unless other countries threatened British interests.

The Empire of Free Trade and the Equatorial Atlantic

The Foreign Office was therefore keen to create a supportive overseas atmosphere for British merchants. But when speculative ventures went wrong, such as loan defaults in Latin America, London refused to intervene. Palmerston was sensitive to their cause, but maintained a liberal policy.²¹ In 1848, for example, he told British representatives abroad that they were to be “earnest and friendly” in promoting the interests of British investors. Only under the extreme circumstances of dramatic losses would Britain bring such private matters into the diplomatic realm.²² Instead, Britain shifted to a freer trade mentality to further commercial development, moving away from securing exclusive access to trade. In the early 1820s, William Huskisson, the new Board of Trade President, renewed calls for tariff reductions to promote trade. Meanwhile, reciprocity treaties reduced the scope of the Navigation Acts and in 1825 London extended the policy to specific British colonial “free” ports, as long as it was reciprocated.²³

With Britain at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution, the capitalists wanted trade barriers lowered so they could buy cheap primary resources and “undersell continental rivals” in a spirit of “free trade.” Parliament enfranchised the “middle class” in 1832, with the first Reform Bill, and they too began to support the free trade movement. Meanwhile, by the 1840s, the government lowered duties on wool and

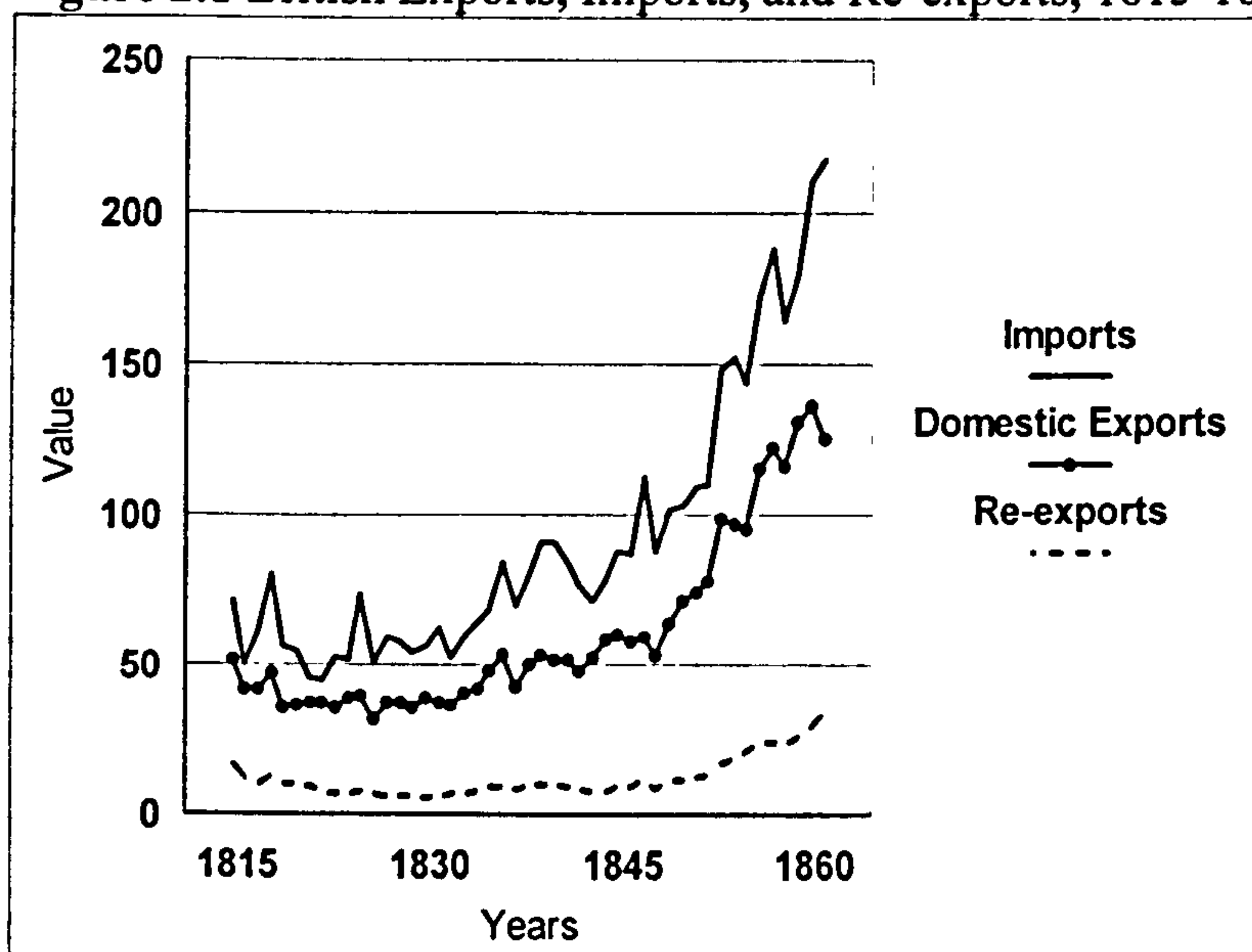
²¹ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 3-4.

²² PRO, Foreign Office (FO) 83/110, reprint in Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, Doc. 46, Palmerston’s Circular to British Representatives abroad, 15 January 1848.

²³ Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy, the Empire of Free Trade, and Imperialism, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 218 and Imlah, *Economic Elements in the Pax Britannica*, 17 and 3-14. The navigation laws applied to cargo imported into Britain and covered European, colonial, African, Asian, American, the coasting and fisheries trades. Traders had to bring goods directly into Britain in British ships, defined from both home and the colonies as British built and owned with her master and three-quarters of her crew British (Sarah Palmer, *Politics, Shipping and the Repeal of the Navigation Laws* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990], 41-42, 50-53 and 74-80).

cotton imports and coal exports. By the early 1840s, one supporter of free trade was Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister. The 1848 continental revolutions made the government wary of innovation, but Peel's government obtained vague commitments from other powers, like Prussia and the United States, to open trade to Britain, if Britain repealed the Navigation Acts. They were repealed on 13 June 1849, but the British coasting trade remained protected and the government had the power to retaliate against any country that failed to grant British shipping similar concessions.²⁴

Figure 2.1 British Exports, Imports, and Re-exports, 1815-1861, £ millions



Source: Based on data from "External Trade 2. Official Values and Values at Current Prices of External Trade – United Kingdom 1796-1853" and "External Trade 3. Values at Current Prices of External Trade – United Kingdom 1854-1980," in B.R. Mitchell, (ed.), *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 451. Note: Computed or Declared Values.

Economically and strategically, a new empire was "founded to obtain a commercial end[.]"²⁵ Figure 2.1 reveals the increase in total British commerce during the early nineteenth century; exports for example, rose to £125.1 million by 1861. As

²⁴ Ralph Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), 62; Semmel, *Free Trade Imperialism*, 139-141; Reynolds, *Command of the Sea*, 329-330; Imlah, *Economic Elements in the Pax Britannica*, 15; and Palmer, *Politics, Shipping*, 98-113 and 154-163.

²⁵ Semmel, *Free Trade Imperialism*, 150 and 157.

tables 2.3 and 2.4 show, trade between Britain and the United States became the most valuable. That between Africa, Latin America, and Britain also expanded, although trade growth with Latin America stagnated after its initial increase in the 1820s. But British trade with all regions grew in the decade following Peel’s reforms. The United States, the West Indies, Latin America, and Africa, on opposite sides of the Atlantic, were important regions in Britain’s economic web. In these regions, London hoped to balance economic interests with maintaining peace and stability.

Table 2.3 Select British Export Destinations, £000

Years	Africa	USA	West Indies	Latin America
1814-6	353	7348	6906	2476
1824-6	372	5695	4123	5009
1834-6	967	9438	4117	5047
1844-6	1368	7162	3866	5634
1854-6	2623	20078	3947	8974

Source: Ralph Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), Table 38, Exports (£000), 89.

Table 2.4 Select British Import Sources, £000

Years	Africa	USA	West Indies	Latin America
1814-6	703	3976	16656	6227
1824-6	681	6061	8577	3109
1834-6	2017	13223	7946	3380
1844-6	2898	14058	5937	4905
1854-6	5218	30282	8709	9698

Source: Davis, *Industrial Revolution*, Table 40, Imports (£000), 93.

The British had colonial interests in the West Indies: Jamaica, Barbados, and other islands where, until emancipation in 1833, slave-produced crops fuelled Britain, although trade with the West Indies generally declined. But in the 1820s, London also wanted to secure access to other parts of Latin America. A deeper analysis of the motives behind these statistics reveals that gentlemanly capitalists hoped for commercial expansion in this region, despite its stagnation until the 1850s. Often ignoring the lower classes, they believed that the demands of their gentlemanly

counterparts represented that of an entire population. Consequently, for example, “[o]ptimists saw in Latin America ... limitless opportunities for the expansion of trade.” Upper class Britons created an image of opportunity although the population of the region was too poor to purchase many British commodities.²⁶ In 1829, Reverend Robert Walsh, for example, visited shops in Villa Rica, Minas Geraes, and reported them “filled with cotton goods from Manchester, broadcloths from Yorkshire, stockings from Nottingham, hats from London, cutlery from Sheffield[.]” But Platt concluded that “[m]any travellers, consuls or commercial men were by class and temperament disinclined to visit local markets and examine the goods on display.” Instead, they visited gentlemanly shops along the main plazas that serviced the “small upper class” with “goods of the latest fashion.”²⁷

Latin America looked like an avenue of gentlemanly expansion, but in reality, supply outpaced demand. Regardless, British merchants flooded the region with a variety of commodities. John Luccock, a Rio merchant, received wallets, but exclaimed that such items were useless as there was no paper money. Meanwhile, “Lima, in 1826, was overflowing with British shawls and dresses; 40,000 muslin dresses had arrived in one vessel, consigned to a single mercantile house.” The British Committee of Merchants exemplified the elite’s narrow analysis. The Committee opined in 1824 that Argentina lived on British imports. But Platt concluded that their “argument was exaggerated, based on a knowledge of the more accessible provinces and on a disinclination to look as far down as the bottom levels of society.”²⁸ Hopes and dreams encouraged interest in these regions and moulded diplomatic and naval relations.

In Latin America, Anglo-American relations were more likely to clash because of the proximity of US and British interests, the collapsing Spanish American Empire

²⁶ D.C.M. Platt, *Latin America and British Trade 1806-1914* (London: Adams & Charles Black, 1972), 3-9.

²⁷ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 18 and Platt, *Latin America and British Trade*, 18.

²⁸ Platt, *Latin America and British Trade*, 21-25.

and its last strongholds of strategically important Cuba and Puerto Rico. With the homeland in chaos, during the Napoleonic Wars, the Spanish-American colonies declared self-rule in the name of King Ferdinand. Spain was too weak to prevent its Spanish-American colonies from rebelling, refused to recognise them, and began waging war. One by one Spanish-American colonies declared independence and launched privateers, while pirates took advantage of the turmoil to plunder trade. Guatemala declared independence in 1821; Mexico and the Central American states in 1823; then Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay. Spain used the “Balance of Power” system to justify their existence during upheavals. The disputes drew in America and Britain because Cuba and Puerto Rico were strategically important maritime locations and the Spanish upheavals threatened yet another revolution that would draw in conservative Europeans.²⁹ A positive image motivated Britain to exploit regional problems to secure access to markets and keep rivals away. As the next chapter will reveal, latent British mercantilism conditioned diplomacy, and naval policy, but they first wanted to disrupt the moves of other powers.

Bourne surmised that Canning feared the rise of the United States, rapidly becoming a competitor in that region. Cuba was of particular concern because of its strategic location that gave any nation controlling it the power to threaten trade passing through the region. Canning also feared France and America combining their naval power against Britain. Consequently, Bourne concluded, “British policy in the Caribbean ... was primarily defensive, keeping an eye on the Americans, trying to tie their hands by formal diplomatic arrangements, and removing all excuse for intervention [by the European Concert Powers] by curbing the activities of Spanish

²⁹ Modelski and Thompson, *Seapower*, 273; Jay Kinsbruner, *Independence in Spanish America: Civil Wars, Revolutions, and Underdevelopment* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 5-37, 46-69 and 81-100; Richard Pennell, “State Power in a Chronically Weak State: Spanish Coastguards as Pirates, 1814-50,” *European History Quarterly*, 25:3 (1995): 353-355; and Jenifer Marx, *Pirates and Privateers of the Caribbean* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 1992), 267-268.

pirates operating from Cuba.”³⁰ Therefore, Britain avoided too much pressure like occupying Cuba to stop piracy, or being too forceful with local Spanish authorities over privateers. The same was true with British policy toward the Cuban slave trade throughout this period. Too much force might drive the island from weaker Spain into American hands, posing a greater threat to British interests.³¹ Samuel Flagg Bemis best summed up that British policy was “to balance European powers in rivalry while Great Britain continued unmolested to consolidate her territorial gains of 1815 and ply the markets and maritime trade of the world.”³²

West Africa was another region in the equatorial Atlantic of concern for the “free traders.” But if the gentlemanly prognosticators were correct, as will be discussed in Chapter Six, its development also needed guidance. African supplies to Britain would only increase if force shifted factors of production from the profitable foreign slave trade to legitimate commodities. There were alternatives to the slave trade within the African economy. The lubricant industry, for example, could use palm oil, a use that would transform the African palm oil trade. The strategy was to “draw Africa into Britain’s sphere of influence by the creation of economic linkages and the development of dependent African economies” – an informal empire.³³

³⁰ Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 64-66.

³¹ Andrew Lambert, *Trincomalee: The Last of Nelson’s Frigates* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2002), 56-59.

³² Samuel Flagg Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States*, 5th Edition (New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, Inc., 1965), 203.

³³ Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*. 2nd Edition (Hong Kong: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1981), 1-8; Martin Lynn, “The ‘Imperialism of Free Trade’ and the Case of West Africa, c. 1830-c.1870,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 15:1 (October 1986): 24; and Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 564-565. For details of African political economy see Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730-1830* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 43-54 and 104-106. The so-called Robinson and Gallagher thesis of informal, free trade, empire in Africa has been controversial. Lynn believed that they were too prone to see early British activity in Africa in terms of the scramble for Africa later in the century. Lynn concluded that policy in London was different from what occurred in Africa. There was British “commercial penetration,” but little control. British power was limited, the navy lacked the ability “to strike inland[.]” The Ashanti people were the true power until the 1870s, and defeated the British in 1806, 1823-24, 1863 and 1869 (Lynn, “Imperialism of Free Trade,” 28-29 and 34-35). For more

British trade with West Africa grew as the Industrial Revolution continued. The Industrial Revolution in Britain demanded “legitimate” African goods. Initially British participation in West African trade was limited to rich entrepreneurs who could afford to undertake the risk involved. Exports from British West Africa to the United Kingdom rose from £252,814 in 1854 – largely composed of palm oil (40.2%) and timber (36.4%) – to £1,099,256 in 1884, largely palm oil (53.9%) and nuts for oil (25.9%). The establishment of regular steam communications brought a marked change in British mercantile activities along the coast. Regular steam ship routes meant that merchants could arrange for a quicker turnover in merchandise, smaller inventories, and they no longer needed to manage both the shipping and merchandise sides of business.³⁴

But there was little desire in official Britain for direct control of West Africa. British abolitionists convinced the government to establish colonies at Sierra Leone (1808), Gambia (1816) and the Gold Coast (1821), to use as centres from which legitimate commerce would replace the slave trade.³⁵ Elsewhere, the British signed free trade and anti-slave trade treaties with natives and policed the slave trade usually only with the permission of other countries. The goal was to protect British merchants, promote legitimate commerce, and “achieve a virtual industrial monopoly for” Britain under the protection of the Royal Navy.³⁶ British mercantile and shipping activities along the West African coast suited British foreign policy. Freely traded goods from the African coast fed British industry and the British could refrain from the expense of formal African colonies.

on the Robinson and Gallagher debate see Wm. Roger Louis, (ed.), *The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (New York and London: New Viewpoints, A Division of Franklin Watts, 1976).

³⁴ Peter N. Davies, “Shipping and Imperialism: The Case of British West Africa,” in Gordon Jackson and David M. Williams, (eds.), *Shipping, Technology and Imperialism* (Hants, England: Scholar Press, 1996), 48-61 and table 2.1.

³⁵ Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 468-470 and Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 27-30.

³⁶ Semmel, *Free Trade Imperialism*, 150 and 157.

The Royal Navy held the “keys” to world trade routes for the gentlemanly capitalists. Gough opined that this “gave Britain enhanced means of protecting trade, stamping out illegal trade ... and encouraging the legitimate prosecution of commerce, whether it be British or non-British.”³⁷ Thus, Britain seized strategically important regions along important trade routes, locations like Lagos, Hong Kong, the Falkland Islands, Singapore, and Aden.³⁸ Bourne concluded that “[g]unboat diplomacy would compel reluctant countries and peoples to open their doors to western trade, while vast battlefleets warned off would-be rivals[.]”³⁹ But it would take a concerted effort to rally international support to end the slave trade. If other countries, like the United States, refused to let the Royal Navy stop their slave trade, it could only be suppressed if that nation then deployed a naval force to police its own citizens. However, British activities along the African coast instilled fear and jealousy in American naval officers.

British Naval Strategy and Deployment

The British therefore used sea power during the early nineteenth century to meet “Grand Strategy” and economic needs. Economic growth, policy, and strategic interests conditioned naval deployment. The “triangular struggle” of domestic, foreign, and naval matters dictated naval policy in this period. British politicians agreed that the nation had to maintain a navy that could counter the next two or three largest naval powers.⁴⁰ The Royal Navy deployed around the world, but general British strategy was directed toward her Indian possessions. Safe passage through the Mediterranean and around the Cape was important to maintain British communications with India.⁴¹ But Bartlett

³⁷ Gough, “Profit and Power,” 71.

³⁸ Davis, *Industrial Revolution*, 10 and 65-69 and Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 187-200.

³⁹ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 4-5.

⁴⁰ Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power*, 1-2 and 34.

⁴¹ Glede, *Navies and Nations*, 426-432.

concluded that the navy was also useful in Canning and Palmerston's foreign policy because they could apply naval power to the problems they encountered, and it was friendly to the economic restraints and feelings of Parliament.⁴² Andrew Lambert concludes that when relations with Russia and France were good, "ships could then be sent to more distant stations."⁴³

Cain and Hopkins concluded that Britain's "Blue Water" strategy flowed from the gentlemanly strategy. The role of the navy was defensive: to "prevent France from blockading her [Britain's] trade with the continent and to frustrate any attempt at invasion." But Britain also realised that it could never "control continental Europe" and used its naval power to compensate.⁴⁴ In the wake of peace, Britain abandoned few of her colonies and used the Royal Navy to exert influence over new regions. British "free traders" wanted access to places like Africa and Central America.⁴⁵ Paul Kennedy concluded that the British government relied on "the informal influence of the trader, the financier, the consul, the missionary and the naval officer[.]" The Royal Navy was the "stick" that enforced the benefits of commercial trade.⁴⁶

In periods when the elite grew to believe in overseas expansion, contemporaneously, those with influence on naval policy also favoured protection of such objectives. Lord Ellenborough, Peel's First Lord of the Admiralty, for example, believed in the navy's traditional peacetime role of commerce protection and, having been Governor-General of India, was interested in "Indian resources and the distant stations." In the face of the French threat, and the crisis with the United States over Oregon, he believed in a show of strength. But Lord Aberdeen, the Foreign Secretary,

⁴² Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power*, 63-64, 101, 116-123, 136, 144 and 277.

⁴³ Lambert, *Last Sailing Battlefleet*, 52.

⁴⁴ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 89-90.

⁴⁵ Glete, *Navies and Nations*, 426-432 and Richard Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare 1650-1830* (London: University College London Press, 1999), 36.

⁴⁶ Kennedy, *British Naval Mastery*, 150-154.

wanted tensions reduced, and Peel believed that disputes with America could be resolved peacefully.⁴⁷ John Russell's appointee, George Eden, Lord Auckland, and Palmerston in the Foreign Office, continued British strategy. Auckland was willing to work with the French, but also counter their moves. To meet Palmerston's fears, Auckland reacted to deter the French in the Mediterranean and English Channel, but he was "anxious to keep the ships of the two nations apart, if only to avoid accidents."⁴⁸

British liberals believed that trade would replace war and the concept culminated during *Pax Britannica*. While Britain was a powerful nation with a strong navy, imposing her will unilaterally on other nations threatened retaliation, military or economic, that would hurt trade. Because of Britain's distant colonial holdings and "commercial interests" it was in her interest to maintain peace. Imlah concluded that Britain's commercial interests dictated "moderate policies" and the nation's role "in the Concert of Powers was, therefore, essentially a mediating one."⁴⁹ "Grand Strategy" considerations went along side trade considerations. Britain's trade with the US was great and would also be hurt if Britain held steadfast to her old ideas. By 1856, and the Declaration of Paris, for example, the "New Rule" replaced mercantilist naval practices. Most nations, except the United States, rejected privateering, and shipping free from "contraband" was finally free from naval harassment. Palmerston told a gathering of Liverpool merchants that the New Rule meant that war would be limited to battles between professional government forces that left private commerce alone. The subtle influence of the navy, and engagement, were preferable ways to implement policy and maintain watch on other nations.⁵⁰

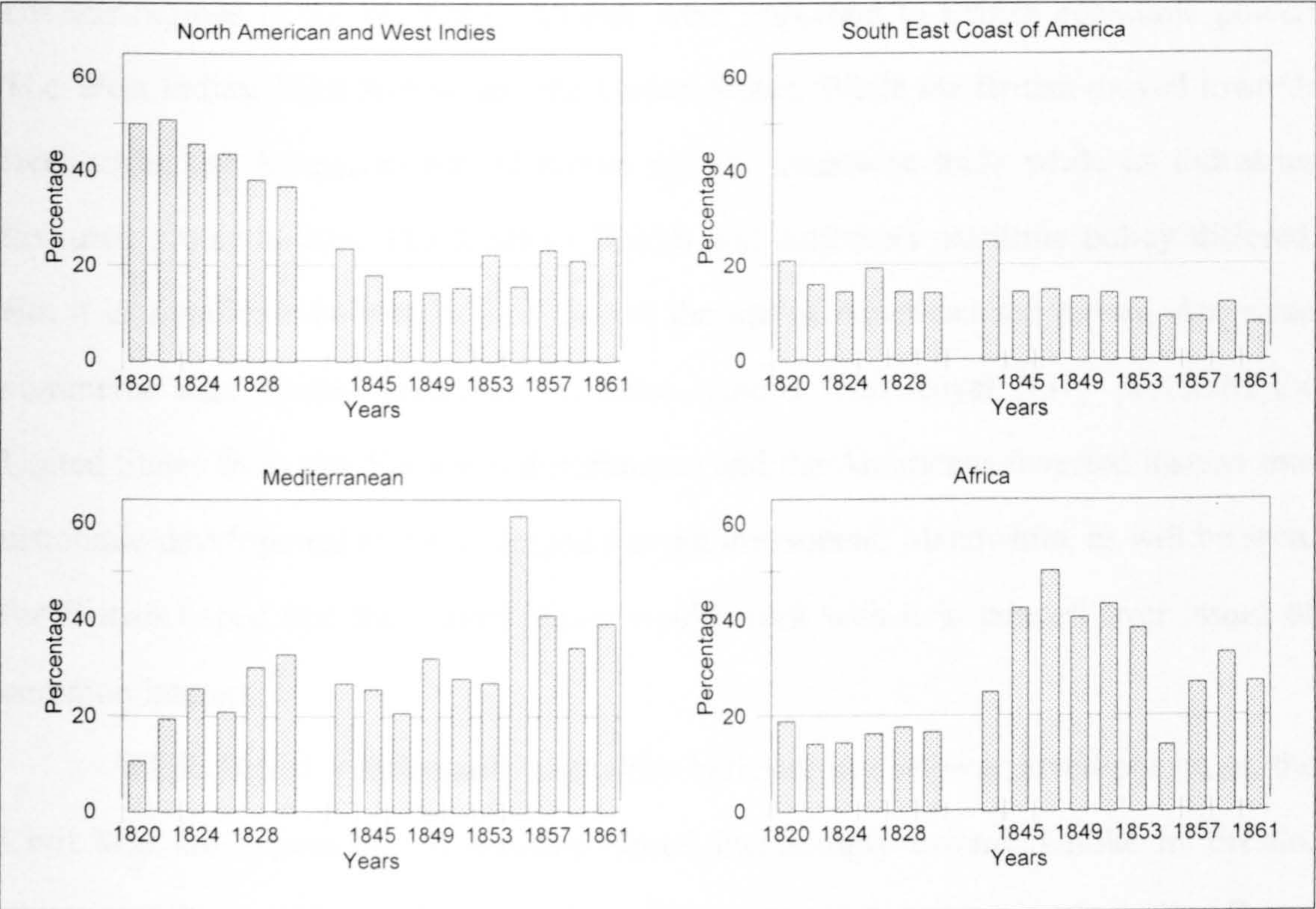
⁴⁷ Lambert, *Last Sailing Battlefleet*, 38-39 and 47-48.

⁴⁸ Lambert, *Last Sailing Battlefleet*, 50-54.

⁴⁹ Imlah, *Economic Elements in the Pax Britannica*, 5-6.

⁵⁰ Kennedy, *British Naval Mastery*, 200-201 and Bernard Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy: Ideology, Interest, and Sea Power during the Pax Britannica* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 4, 8-10, 18-23 and 53-57.

Figure 2.2 Royal Navy Deployment Atlantic (Percentage of Ships), 1820-1830 and 1843-1861



Source: Calculated from, PRO, Navy List, 1820-1861.
Note: Vessel deployment in British Home Waters is not included.

The Atlantic deployment pattern of the Royal Navy reveals the dynamic of British geopolitical and economic considerations. Immediately following the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812, the largest percentage of Royal Navy vessels in the Atlantic were concentrated along the North American coast and in the West Indies. But figure 2.2, to be further decomposed in later chapters, reveals that the Mediterranean was becoming the focus for the Royal Navy. Deployment along the African coast, from West Africa to the Cape, also grew, peaking in the 1840s and 1850s – with the exception of during the Crimean War. This study will show that British economic factors shaped Royal Navy deployment in the Gulf of Mexico and along the African coast. The analysis will reveal the nexus of British goals, and how they affected Anglo-American relations in the equatorial Atlantic. Britain used sea power to expand her economic interests, but modified its use when it threatened American sensitivities.

American Maritime Policy

Diverse regions in the equatorial Atlantic were important to British economic power: The West Indies, West Africa, and the United States. While the British moved towards freer trade, the Americans turned increasingly to coastwise trade while its industries favoured protectionism. The focus of British and American maritime policy differed. But it is significant because it also shaped the use of American sea power. American commerce also needed protection in these regions. The Royal Navy protected the United States from any European disturbances and the Americans invested instead into economic development and encouraged foreign investment. Meanwhile, as will be seen, the British hoped that the United States would work with it in concert over issues of common interest.⁵¹

While British gentlemanly capitalists believed in overseas development, as the Civil War era approached Americans turned increasingly inward. Unlike in Britain, there was little continuity of support for overseas American economic expansion. Deep-sea American trade suffered from 1821, as Northern factories demanded more and more cotton, thus feeding the coastal trade. That trade, by 1831, "supplanted foreign trade as the major activity of the merchant marine." Of the "distant trades" the most profitable was in the Pacific, in particular with China. In the 1850s, a vessel travelling from New York to California could make \$80,000 in one voyage, and then make another \$50,000 by carrying tea to London from Hong Kong. In contrast, African trade was a minuscule percentage of total American trade. It may have almost doubled from 1840 to 1860, but it only represented a growth of 0.6-1% by 1860.⁵²

⁵¹ Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 229-230 and K. Jack Bauer, "The Golden Age," in Robert A. Kilmarx, (ed.), *America's Maritime Legacy: A History of the U.S. Merchant Marine and Shipbuilding Industry Since Colonial Times* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 27-36.

⁵² Bauer, "Golden Age," 45 and 57-59 and Bauer, *A Maritime History of the United States: The Role of America's Seas and Waterways* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 84-92. On the China trades see, Paul E. Fontenoy, "Ginseng, Otter Skins, and Sandalwood: The Conundrum of the China Trade," *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du Nord*, 7:1 (January 1997): 1-16. Fontenoy concluded that the "American attempts to penetrate this mythical market relied on massive exploitation of every opening, leading to market saturation and collapse, whereupon the cycle was repeated with a new commodity" (Fontenoy, "Ginseng, Otter Skins," 1).

The North benefited from the growth in the shipping trades before 1807 and they developed insurance companies, a shipping infrastructure and business capital. When the re-export trade began to decline, Northern merchants shifted their activity to the cotton trade and New York grew as cotton's financial centre, dependent on the prosperity of the South. Meanwhile, New Orleans, on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, gained prominence as a seaport for shipping from the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio Rivers. The English textile industry demanded cotton and turned to the Southern United States; from 1815 to the Civil War, the Southern economy was centred on cotton.⁵³

After the War of 1812, the United States enacted its own Navigation Act in 1817. Under this Act, goods imported to the United States had to be brought in American vessels, or vessels owned by the manufacturing country. Yet such a policy could be lifted if another country put American shipping on an equal footing to their own. But the most significant aspect of the Navigation Act (1817) was the provision that barred foreign vessels from involvement in the American coastwise trade. H. David Bess and Martin T. Farris concluded that "this formal reservation of the coastal traffic known as cabotage provided the so-called first pillar of modern U.S. maritime policy."⁵⁴

American shipping turned away from trade between other countries and focussed on American imports, exports, and the coasting trade. While the shipping industry liked free trade, the rising commercial manufacturing sector supported protectionism. Former "maritime" States, like Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York became manufacturing States and increasingly protectionist. The result was that "by the outbreak of the Civil War the United States had forsaken her maritime orientation."⁵⁵ Improvements in Great Lakes' transportation and railway construction

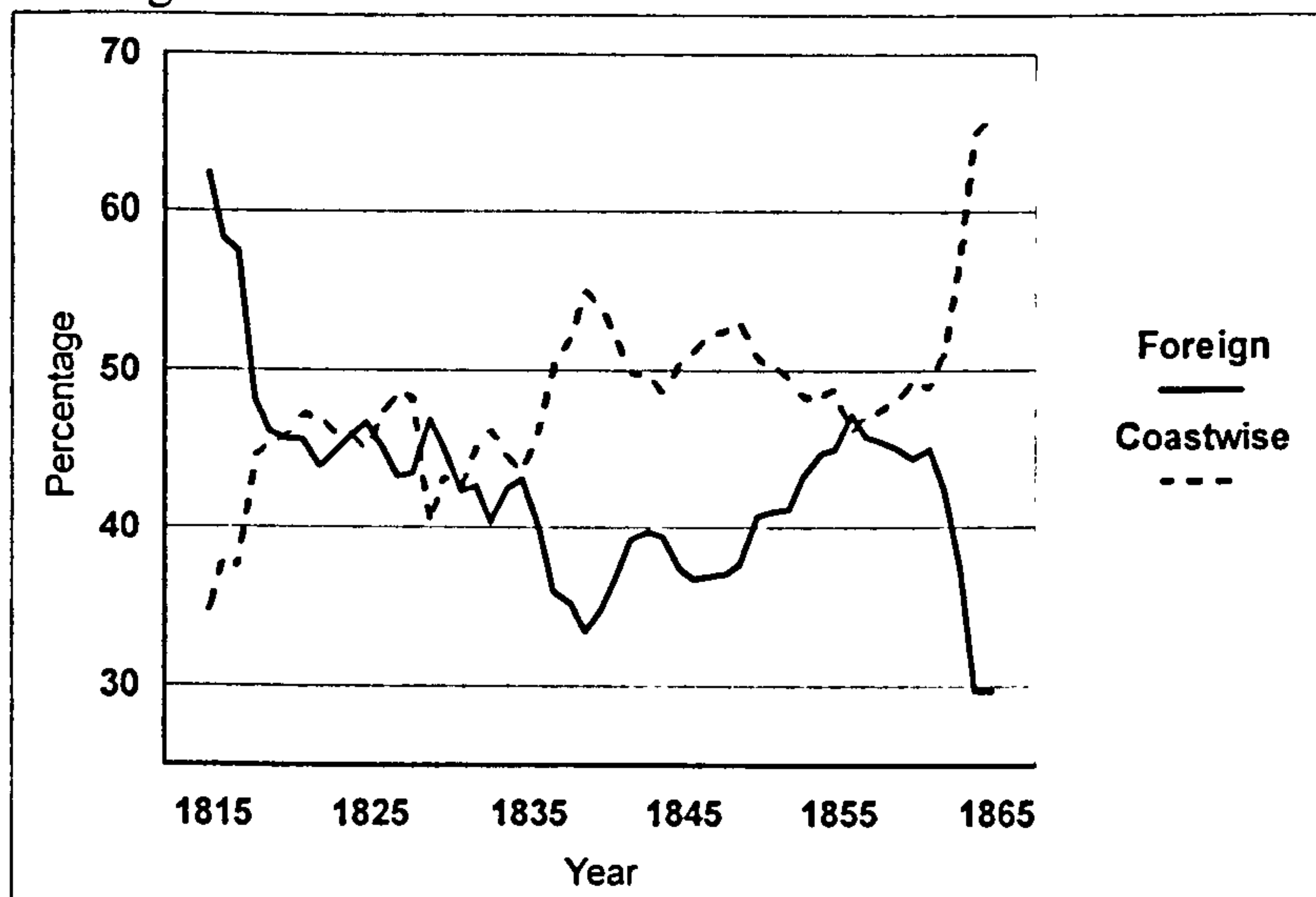
⁵³ Douglass C. North, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790 to 1860* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), 62-71 and Bauer, "Golden Age," 45 and 57-59.

⁵⁴ H. David Bess and Martin T. Farris, *U.S. Maritime Policy: History and Prospects* (New York: Praeger, 1981), 17 and Bauer, *Maritime History*, 104-107 and 117.

⁵⁵ North, *Economic Growth*, 77 and Bauer, "Golden Age," 45 and 57-59.

also increased trade flows between the West and East. The result was increased East-West trade and the development of urban centres, like Chicago and Cincinnati along strategically important shipping points.⁵⁶ The result was dramatic for American commerce.

Figure 2.3 American Vessel Trades, 1815-1865, Percentage Involvement, Registered Tonnage



Source: Calculated from data contained in "Series Q 417-432. Documented Merchant Vessels, by Major Classes, Materials of Which Built, and Trade: 1789 to 1970," in Ben J. Wattenberg, (ed.), *Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976), 750.

Note: Total percentage calculated also included vessels involved in whaling and the cod and mackerel trades. These trades composed less than 10% of the trades (and often less than 5%) and were therefore omitted from this graph.

Figure 2.3 shows that American shipping was increasingly involved in the coastwise trade. American shipping patterns can be divided into three periods: Foreign trade declined from 1815 to about 1835; from 1835 to 1855, the coastwise trade was dominant, but the foreign trades were again ascending. Finally, post-1855 marked a steep decline in foreign trades and a rise in the coastwise trades just before the outbreak of the Civil War. These trends are significant because they parallel the focus of US naval assets, and helped shaped Anglo-American naval relations. This study will reveal that American naval interest was focussed close to home waters during the earlier

⁵⁶ North, *Economic Growth*, 135-146 and 153.

period, to the detriment of West African deployment. American interests in using sea power to further long-term West African interests peaked over the middle period, but declined again as home waters took on renewed importance by the final period. In periods of overseas decline, Americans who supported Atlantic expansion feared that the opportunity cost of neglect was British dominance.

America's Naval Policy

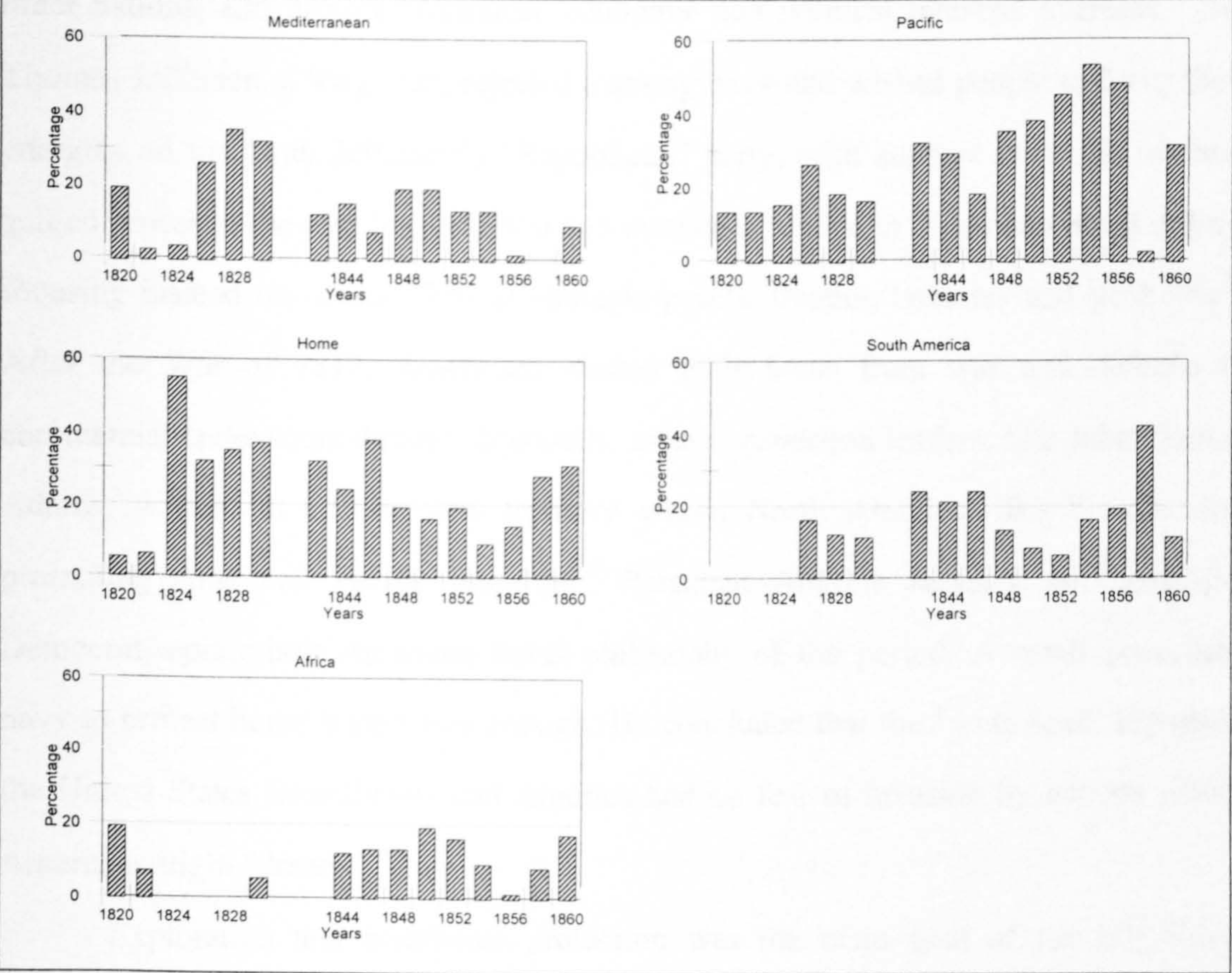
The pattern of American economic growth affected its use of sea power. US shipping during this period was involved in the coastwise trades and foreign expansion was largely in non-British possessions. Consequently, the United States was more concerned about its strategic and trading interests close to home and the Pacific. American naval policy focussed on trade protection and meeting, reactively, any threats. Naval support for other, non-trading, issues arose, but it quickly foundered on the American fear of a strong military, dislike of colonies, and fear of becoming involved in European problems. US naval policy was inconsistent, waxing and waning with temporary threats and the desires of individual leaders who supported its use for longer-term goals.

Figure 2.4, to be further decomposed in subsequent chapters, reveals that the general trend of US naval deployment from 1820 to 1860 was close to home and towards the Pacific. Sudden changes in deployment were to meet immediate threats. For example, as will be shown in Chapters Three and Four, during the piracy crisis of the 1820s, and during the Mexican-American War centring on 1845, to be discussed in Chapter Seven, vessels were moved to home waters. Meanwhile, Chapter Eight will reveal that the Pacific saw a sudden drop in 1858 as US warships were moved to Home waters and South America to meet threats during diplomatic disputes with Paraguay and Britain.

American naval deployment reflected their interest in using the force to protect trading interests. During peacetime, vessels sailed the Mediterranean, Latin American coasts, and the Pacific in support of American interests. The American goal was only to

use its battleships to break any potential British blockade of its coast. Jan Glete concluded that the “pre-1812 navalist ambitions of using the battle fleet as a force to influence European power politics proved unrealistic in an age when Great Britain ruled the oceans.” The primary duty of the US Navy was “policing activities against much weaker nations or to fight trade warfare against the only nation that had a superior navy that mattered, Great Britain.”⁵⁷

Figure 2.4 US Navy Deployment (Percentage of Ships), 1820-1830 and 1842-1860



Source: Calculated from United States, *Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1820-1860.

Before the outbreak of the Civil War, the main role of the US Navy was the protection of American lives and commerce. As the nation approached the Civil War era the government began to use the navy to initiate trade contacts, collect scientific and

⁵⁷ Glete, *Navies and Nations*, 439-440.

commercial information, and undertake diplomacy. But the Navy Department lacked consistent leadership advocating expansion and an active US Navy. American trade, commerce, and shipping grew during this period, but commercially America remained tied to traditional markets in Europe and North America. Yet, some Americans believed that the American destiny lay in the South and Pacific. They advocated a larger navy and commercial expansion.⁵⁸

The “Navalists” wanted the navy to suppress piracy, “show the flag” to impress other nations, and protect “American economic and political interests overseas.” But Thomas Jefferson, a Virginian, rejected a strong navy and wished people to focus their energies on the land. Jefferson’s “Republican” party, with support from the interior, gained power in the elections of 1800 and marked a decline in American naval policy, focusing instead on coastal forts at strategic points, floating batteries and gunboats.⁵⁹ After the War of 1812, Americans shifted their focus from war and defence to commercial endeavours through diplomatic means. American leaders, like John Quincy Adams, worked to acquire new territory within North America, like Florida, and promoting American Pacific interests.⁶⁰ President Andrew Jackson, an “agrarian” Democrat, epitomised American naval philosophy of the period. A small peacetime navy to protect home waters was enough. He concluded that the “wide seas” separated the United States from threats and America had no fear of invasion by nations whom American might “dread[.]”⁶¹

Exploration and commerce protection was the main goal of the US Navy. Secretary of the Navy Samuel L. Southard ordered individual warships on survey

⁵⁸ Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire*, 3-5.

⁵⁹ Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists*, 11-19 and Sprout and Sprout, *Rise of American Naval Power*, 12, 54-55, 71, 107-111. See also, Spencer C. Tucker, *The Jefferson Gunboat Navy* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 10-35.

⁶⁰ Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire*, 13-18.

⁶¹ PRO, Admiralty (Adm) 7/712, “Extract from the President’s Message December 1830,” newspaper clipping, 4 January 1831.

cruises in the Pacific. The Secretary of the Navy reported in 1833 that the navy had extended its “intercourse” with the Portuguese and African coasts, presumably the Northern African coast. Meanwhile, American warships had made cruises to the Indian Ocean, while the West Indian squadron became more of a “home squadron” with parts of it making annual visits to “Atlantic ports.” In March 1836, the Board of Navy Commissioners and the Secretary of the Navy proposed a focus on the defence of the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippi Valley, and other commercial routes close to home waters.⁶² John H. Schroeder concluded that American naval policy adhered “to a traditional view that the navy was responsible for combating pirates, preserving neutral rights, and responding to the periodic outrages” rather than actively aiding in the expansion of US commerce.⁶³ But by the late 1830s and early 1840s, the United States also began to use sea power to further long-term economic goals.

Secretary of the Navy Abel P. Upshur became the strongest American advocate of the use of sea power to protect commerce, but also to advance long-term American commercial interests. American merchants had established outposts along the Chilean coast, the Columbia River, and Upper California, and they needed protection. He told Congress that other countries, like Britain and France, had large navies to support their commercial endeavours. In 1842, he explained that America needed a stronger force in the Pacific “to prevent other nations from subjecting our trade to injurious restrictions and embarrassments[,]” particularly by the British. But even with Upshur, home waters were the focus. The Gulf of Mexico was important to national trade, including States farther inland along the Mississippi and its tributaries. Most trade passed through the Gulf of Florida, and steam-frigates could blockade it. Upshur concluded, “if we be

⁶² PRO, Adm 7/712, “Extract of the Report” [of the Secretary of the Navy, 30 November 1833]; Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire*, 13-28 and 35-36; and Sprout and Sprout, *Rise of American Naval Power*, 12, 54-55, 107-111.

⁶³ Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire*, 37-41.

without a naval force, that commerce may be annihilated at a cost which would not be felt by any tenth-rate maritime power!”⁶⁴

On the eve of the Civil War, through conservatism and regional differences, naval strategy was little different from that of the War of 1812. Opponents who saw no need for a strong navy under the circumstances quelled calls for naval expansion.⁶⁵ A shift in US policy came with the election of James Buchanan as President in 1857. The Democrat supported his party’s 1856 election platform that called for freedom of the seas, free trade, and rigid enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine. However, Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey assured Congress that the Executive was not pushing a large peacetime navy to compete with “commercial powers.” The resulting Buchanan policy was therefore reactive, responding again to a crisis using the small US Navy. Meanwhile, Northern anti-slavery advocates did not support an expanded shallow-draft navy for a slavery South with expansionist goals.⁶⁶ With such divergent views, the US Navy only supported US commerce, particularly in the Pacific, and in regions where minor crisis or short wars erupted. In contrast, the Royal Navy focussed its attention in a variety of locations, but largely in the Mediterranean. This study will show that the problem for the British was to convince the Americans to dispatch warships in support of British humanitarian and economic goals, such as slave trade suppression, without precipitating war.

⁶⁴ Sprout and Sprout, *Rise of American Naval Power*, 118-120; United States, *Congressional Globe*, 27th Cong., 2nd sess., 1841-42, Appendix, 16-23, A.P. Upshur, “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 4 Dec 1841” and United States, *Congressional Globe*, 27th Cong., 2nd sess., 1842-43, Appendix, 40-48, A.P. Upshur, “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, Navy Department, December 1842.”

⁶⁵ Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire*, 63-65, 95-99, 117, and 121-128 (for examples of the exploring expeditions see Schroeder chapters 6, 7 and 8) and Sprout and Sprout, *Rise of American Naval Power*, 123-150.

⁶⁶ Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire*, 130-132 and 188.

Anglo-American Economic Relations

The “dynamic” of this Atlantic economy involved the flow of trade, labour and capital. There was an alliance between British and American interests. Anglo-American diplomatic relations were less easy than their economic relations, but the latter probably kept them from degenerating into war. The US Civil War marked a cooling of Anglo-American relations and brought the countries close to war. Historians, like Allen and Thistlethwaite, have concluded that a common culture, economy and political philosophy connected Britain and America. The British shared their connections with the Northern intellectual and commercial class, while the Southern States were linked with the old British Tory class that was “waning in force.”⁶⁷ A peaceful and stable United States, that encouraged foreign investment, was important for the gentlemanly capitalists. They could invest in America and hope for returns as it expanded.⁶⁸

British investment in the United States during the early nineteenth century was small and concentrated in areas of potential growth. Backed by influential British banking houses like Baring Brothers, investment provided American banks with liquidity and railways with stimulant capital. As one among many regions in the equatorial Atlantic for the gentlemanly capitalists, they desired stability to nurture their investments.⁶⁹ Platt concluded that the “Barings and Rothschilds, amongst others, had nursed American credit so that by the late 1840s and early 1850s British investors were ready once more to place their money in America.”⁷⁰ Politically, London sought to smooth relations with the United States and avoid war. It was no coincidence that Peel

⁶⁷ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 101-121, 195, 382-415 and Thistlethwaite, *Anglo-American Connection*, 172-175. See also the discussion in this study’s Chapter One, 10-15.

⁶⁸ D.C.M. Platt, *Foreign Finance in Continental Europe and the United States, 1815-1870: Quantities, Origins, Functions and Distribution* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 140-171.

⁶⁹ Platt, *Foreign Finance*, 140-146. See also Platt, *Foreign Finance*, Appendix III “United States of America: Foreign Investment in Railway Securities (US\$m.)” which reveals \$300 million of British investment in 1852, and peaking at \$400-500 million by 1857.

⁷⁰ Platt, *Foreign Finance*, 157.

dispatched Lord Ashburton, of the Baring family, to Washington in late 1841 to reduce Anglo-American tensions. To those ends, as will be discussed, he concluded an agreement over naval co-operation in the equatorial Atlantic as a method to mitigate Anglo-American disputes over the application of sea power during peacetime.

Anglo-American economic relations and trade flows are significant because they connected the nations as trading partners and shaped their relations depending on the economic and geographic circumstances. The cotton trade was important in the success of such British ports as Liverpool, and Liverpool merchants developed close ties with American merchant houses in New York and Philadelphia. British merchants settled in Philadelphia and New York forming little British communities like in Greenwich Village. By 1801, there was established an American Chamber of Commerce in Liverpool. The United States was also one exception to the British implementation of the navigation laws as far back as 1815. Under the Reciprocity Treaty of 1815, Britain allowed American ships to import American-produced goods into Britain without being subject to discriminatory duties.⁷¹

The reciprocity treaties between the United States and Britain are an indication of British reaction to growing American economic and shipping power after the War of 1812. The treaties set rules to their trade and competition. Sarah Palmer concluded that reciprocity divided “Anglo-American business between the ships of the powers to the exclusion of other maritime nations” and it allowed British shipowners to retain a “share of this business.” Reciprocity was not free trade; Britain allowed American ships to carry their own country’s products to Britain, and the British could only ship their own products to America in British ships.⁷² Yet British access to the American coasting trade was not granted and talks to let British ships deliver goods to California failed. While

⁷¹ Thistlethwaite, *Anglo-American Connection*, 5-18 and 35-36 and Palmer, *Politics, Shipping*, 41-45.

⁷² Palmer, *Politics, Shipping*, 53-54, 168-169 and 176-186.

the British moved toward freer trade, the Americans went in the opposite direction.⁷³ While Britain turned to free trade, the United States was wary of its rivals. British and American economic philosophies would condition their relations at the diplomatic and naval levels, especially over piracy and slave trade suppression.

Table 2.5 Select US Export Destinations, 1821-1860 (\$ millions)

Year	Canada	Cuba	Mexico	Britain	Asia	Africa
1821-25	11	23	6	123	8	
1826-30	11	28	20	117	7	
1831-35	16	25	28	188	7	
1836-40	18	30	18	274	6	
1841-45	27	25	8	222	11	
1846-50	40	28	11	349	13	
1851-55	86	33	14	494	14	
1856-60	128	51	19	694	26	

Source: "Series U 317-334. Value of Exports (Including Reexports) of U.S. Merchandise, by Country of Destination: 1790 to 1970," columns 319, 320, 321, 325, 329, and 334, in Wattenberg, (ed.), *Statistical History of the United States*, 904.
Note: Blank indicates low value or no data. Wattenberg indicates no exports to Africa until 1865.

Table 2.6 Select US Import Sources, 1821-1860 (\$ millions)

Year	Canada	Cuba	Mexico	Britain	Asia	Africa
1821-25		33	1	152	41	
1826-30		30	5	138	33	
1831-35	5	44	5	220	45	
1836-40	8	56	5	255	50	
1841-45	4	38	5	178	40	
1846-50	12	52	4	295	50	
1851-55	41	89	5	564	88	
1856-60	102	157	6	602	130	

Source: "Series U 335-352. Value of General Imports, by Country of Origin: 1790 to 1970," Columns 337, 338, 339, 343, 347, and 352, in Wattenberg, (ed.), *Statistical History of the United States*, 907.
Note: Blank indicates low value or no data. Wattenberg indicates no African imports until 1865.

The resulting American trade flows reflected the focus of the American economy. Table 2.5 reveals that Africa is so insignificant that it fails to even register in the aggregate statistics. Meanwhile, exports to Cuba, Mexico, Canada, and Asia grew.

⁷³ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 75-77.

Table 2.5 shows that Britain was the main destination of American exports. Exports to Britain rose from \$123 million to \$694 million over the period 1821-25 to 1856-60. Table 2.6 reveals a similar pattern for imports to the United States. Again, African imports were insignificant. Imports from Britain rose from \$152 million in the period 1821-25, to \$602 million by 1856-60, while Cuba and Asia were the next most important sources.

But the early nineteenth century also marked the beginning of the shift in Anglo-American economic relations. British exports to the United States fell from 18% to 10% of total British exports to the world between 1825 and 1840. American imports to Britain rose from 13% to 26% of America's total exports. Allen believed that this marked a shift in the Anglo-American balance of trade "finally and irrevocably into America's favour." Later, America's total relative exports to Britain, as a percentage of her exports to the whole world, fell approximately 20% from 1880 to 1908. But the relative decline was a result of American economic growth, and penetrating new markets. For example, American exports to China increased by 126% from 1887 to 1897.⁷⁴

The nineteenth century was a period of American growth. European demand for American primary resources, like cotton, integrated the Atlantic economy. Cotton was the dominant American export product, composing over 50% until the outbreak of the Civil War. The need for fresh soil and slaves drove calls in the United States for acquiring Texas, Cuba, and Mexico. It also fed the view that the Federal government unnecessarily criminalised the slave trade to the detriment of the national economy. In such an atmosphere, the White House, often sympathetic to the South, had little desire to follow through on any substantial slave trade suppression efforts.⁷⁵ While there was an Anglo-American economic connection, it was tenuous and Anglo-American interests

⁷⁴ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 58-63.

⁷⁵ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 54 and Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, 151-158.

could clash easily. The United States and Britain were trading partners, but they also acquired resources, and sold goods, in common regions like the Gulf of Mexico. Britain held overwhelming dominance in other regions, in particular Africa. Meanwhile, Americans desired expansion into regions sensitive to British interests.

But after the War of 1812, Britain maintained a balance of power strategy in North America to keep the United States from gaining Canadian resources and strategic points in the West Indies. On the American continent proper, this meant securing boundary settlements with the United States and in the West Indies, stemming American seizure of absolute control.⁷⁶ The period marked the settlement of many Anglo-American territorial and trade issues. Trade relations improved on 29 September 1827 when the British made overtures to settle boundary problems. Meanwhile, Andrew Jackson's administration asked Britain if they would like to renew US-West Indian trade and the British agreed to the plan. By 29 May 1830, the British began letting American ships back into West Indian ports. Talk rather than war also settled the Oregon boundary problem probably because the Americans wanted to devote their full attention to their conflict with Mexico rather than fight two-front war. From 1849 to 1853, the Whigs governed the United States and relations with Britain were good. The Democrats, under Presidents Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan, were in power in the late 1850s, bringing some ripples in Anglo-American relations, but there was understanding on the British side.⁷⁷ Conflict was to be avoided; for with the Civil War, Joshua Bates, a Barings' partner, worried that a long war "will be destructive of commerce and will materially reduce the profits of B.B. & Co."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 336-340 and Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 53-69 and 85. See also Bourne, *Palmerston: The Early Years, 1784-1841* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982), 577-580, 597 and 618-620.

⁷⁷ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 101-121, 195, 382-415 and Thistlethwaite, *Anglo-American Connection*, 172-175.

⁷⁸ Joshua Bates quoted in Platt, *Foreign Finance*, 147, fns. 35 and 48.

Anglo-American Naval Relations

In the first decade after 1815, Britain was confident in its naval supremacy as French naval development stagnated. Instead, London was concerned about US naval intentions. Impressed by the US Navy's ships in the War of 1812, Britain feared their potential if Washington undertook a major commitment to naval development. By the 1840s, the Anglo-French naval rivalry resumed and placed the nascent US Navy in a new perspective. The French realised the benefit of allies and "the Admiralty was also sensitive about this possibility, particularly fearing a war with both France and the USA at the same time." Consequently, the Admiralty urged a "three-power standard" to match Russia, the United States and France.⁷⁹ Britain was concerned about other European powers, and saw the US Navy as a threat during periods of tension. London dreaded a "coalition of her enemies, and especially one of Europe and America[.]"⁸⁰

While prepared to fight a war, London also took special care to select squadron commanders, like Sir Charles Hotham, with a reputation for co-operating with potential enemies and the tact to minimise conflict. This study will reveal that sea power, while protecting commerce, provided a mechanism through which the nations could relate because they also used it to further long-term national objectives during peacetime. Britain and America could use naval relations as objects of diplomacy that they could rearrange or modify to reduce Anglo-American tension and forward separate objectives. American naval policy varied with the commitments of political leaders. Regardless, British leaders, united in their objectives, maintained watch on the US fleet.

From 1820 to 1842, a general search of *The Times*, with traditional connections to the elite, for general articles on the American Navy turned up about a dozen reports.⁸¹ *The Times* reported US naval construction and even manning problems. If anything,

⁷⁹ C.I. Hamilton, *Anglo-French Naval Rivalry 1840-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1-13.

⁸⁰ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 7-8 and 10.

⁸¹ Crawford, *Anglo-American Crisis*, 17-19.

newspapers presented the British public with a picture of a small, infant force that was hardly any threat to the British. *The Times* even concluded that Anglo-American naval relations were harmonious and probably would continue to be so in the future. A decade later it concluded the US Navy posed no threat to Britain.⁸² A reprint from the *Edinburgh Courant* concluded in early 1841 that Britain's steamships were superior and "the Americans must plainly foresee, in a war with this country, the total destruction of their foreign trade."⁸³

Official Admiralty assessments of the US Navy paint a similar picture. In 1826, the Admiralty sent a naval officer to tour American naval facilities. He observed American naval construction, but also that some American officers believed that naval expansion would founder for a lack of sailors. Meanwhile, another Royal Navy officer observed in 1826 that the Americans thought their steamship, the *Fulton*, was a failure. By 1838, the British also had a low opinion of the US Navy. The British ambassador at Washington concluded "*I believe that the United States are less prepared for War at this moment than they have been at any previous period since the date of the Treaty of Ghent [emphasis in original].*"⁸⁴

Britain only became wary of the US Navy during a crisis. For example, during a Canadian rebellion in the late 1830s, Britain received intelligence that the US Navy was preparing for war and monitored American naval activity. Nevertheless, when the United States went to war, for example with Mexico in the 1840s, London discovered that Washington respected non-belligerent rights. Washington ordered its Gulf commander to continue the war with "vigour" but to "show every consideration to

⁸² *The Times* (London), 10 November 1820, 3, column b; 31 January 1823, 3, column c; 5 February 1827, 2, column d; 15 August 1828, 2, column f and 3, column a; and 7 July 1829, 2, column c.

⁸³ *The Times* (London), 6 October 1825, 2, column c; *Edinburgh Courant*, reprint in *The Times* (London), 10 April 1841, 4, column e.

⁸⁴ PRO, Adm, 7/712, Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane to Viscount Melville, 24 December 1826, Ambassador Fox, memo, 16 June 1838, William Gray, memo, 12 July 1838, and "Extract from a letter received from Commander Crawford Dulls . . . 17 November 1838, on the State of the American Navy at New York."

neutral commerce.” Although the Crimean War was years away, the British saw the benefit of the emerging “New Rule” of the freer trade era and peace with potential enemies.⁸⁵ The threat of the US Navy could be managed. This strategy suited British policy only to interfere with other nations as a last resort to protect important interests.

Conclusion

During the early nineteenth century, Britain and the United States developed policies to further and protect their commercial interests. The British elite hoped to further overseas commerce peacefully, in a freer trade environment. The Royal Navy deployed to protect and further that objective. American commercial policy was largely directed inward and overseas commitments varied with the domestic climate and the views of individual leaders. But both Britain and the United States developed in the equatorial Atlantic and their differing views created conditions whereby tensions could rise. Americans held a protectionist outlook, while Britain feared the United States if she combined with another power during war. Their relations remained tense, but it was in their interests to maintain peace and mitigate disputes in the equatorial Atlantic before war erupted. Their common view that sea power could be used to protect their interests, and develop them peacefully, provided a mechanism through which the nations could relate and adjust their maritime policies rather than go to war.

⁸⁵ PRO, Adm 7/712, Foreign Office memo, 3 May 1839, “Extract of a letter from the Post Office Agent at Lisbon, dated 27th May 1839,” Foreign Office memo, 16 August 1841, and Rear Admiral Sir George Seymour, 29 January 1848.

Chapter Three: From Pirates to Slavers: Anglo-American Policy Making, 1819-1834

British efforts to enlist American co-operation to suppress the slave trade originated in the war against piracy in the Gulf of Mexico in the 1820s. During the 1820s, the United States only reached a consensus to use sea power to protect trade from predatory attacks and left activities along the Eastern equatorial Atlantic, in West Africa, largely to the endeavours of a private colonisation society. Similarly, the British believed in diplomatic manoeuvres to achieve objectives in Central America. Until Britain achieved policy goals, London worked to protect commerce, but softened its use of sea power for fear that it might spark a conflict with jealous rivals. Britain sought diplomatic co-operation with the United States, but remained suspicious that Washington wanted to seize Cuba. Nevertheless, London accepted American positions, such as the Monroe Doctrine, because it helped further larger British goals of warning off the other European powers while securing access to Latin American markets. In the Gulf of Mexico, Britain and the United States used their navies for immediate commerce protection, while leaving market access and expansion to the diplomats. But they also began to use sea power to further long-term objectives without resorting to war with each other when their views differed.

In Britain, the Enlightenment brought the ideas of free labour and support for abolition to end the plight of slaves and their cheaply produced goods. But the United States maintained slavery and many Americans feared the consequences of freedom for Africans in America. The status of the slave trade caused Anglo-American relations to be tense as each developed different policies toward slavery. Despite the differences, Britain and America moved toward reconciling their differences so that sea power could be used to further long-term objectives in the equatorial Atlantic while reducing Anglo-American tension. The White House hoped to placate the British demand to suppress American involvement in the slave trade, but only undertook actions that were domestically acceptable. Washington dispatched single ships from their Gulf of Mexico

anti-piracy patrol, to the West African coast, and combined it with limited support for colonisation efforts to repatriate freed American slaves. In response, Britain decided to wait to see the results rather than push the United States further. The added role of sea power in the equatorial Atlantic became a mechanism through which Britain and America could resolve their disputes peacefully within the confines of their domestic and international interests.

British Policy and the Gulf of Mexico

In the wake of the European wars, London believed that sea power was for providing immediate trade protection while market access was left to merchants and diplomats. Consequently, Britain, while waiting for favourable conditions to recognise the rebel states, moderated her diplomatic and sea power policies to keep conservative European nations from intervening in Latin American disputes. Nineteenth-century British interest in Latin America went back as far as the younger William Pitt. But Britain was tied to her European commitments and Spain refused to let Britain into colonial markets. The British believed that friendship and trade with an independent Latin America was a way to circumvent Spain's monopolistic practices with her colonies and further English economic growth.¹ Britain played little part in the revolutions, although Sir Home Popham attacked Buenos Aires in 1806 on his own initiative and precipitated an unwanted temporary British occupation.

Popham was the son of the British consul to Tetuan, Joseph Popham. The Pophams returned to England and Joseph received a £200/year pension after he was "made the scapegoat for the Government's inability to reach a reasonable relationship" with Emperor Ben Abdallah. Home moved within elite circles, attended Westminster School, and was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge, but it is unclear if he accepted

¹ C.K. Webster, (ed.), *Britain and the Independence of Latin America, 1812-1830: Select Documents from the Foreign Office Archives* (hereafter SDFOA), 2 vols. (New York: Octagon Books, reprint 1970), 8-11.

the offer. Nevertheless, after the Buenos Aires affair, London merchants supported Popham because they hoped to access markets in South America because Napoleon had blocked access to Europe. Despite Popham's court martial, the Merchants and Underwriters of Lloyd's Coffee House welcomed him home as a hero.²

Meanwhile, when Napoleon threatened Portugal after he invaded Spain, Britain protected the Portuguese Royal family as it sailed for the Portuguese colony of Brazil, and obtained a trade agreement in return. Forcefully opening trade during war was one thing, but during peacetime it was a delicate matter, although British merchants supported such endeavours in either case. Traders then replaced British military leaders as Britain tried to develop trade with the Americas, while hoping to prevent other powers – in particular France – from gaining a strong foothold. But it was clear that foreign powers, even Spain, only entered Latin American waters with British permission. Even revolutionary leader Simon Bolívar recognised in 1823 that Britain protected the rebel states from European interference.³

When liberal revolution rocked Spain in 1820, the US Ambassador to Britain, Richard Rush, was aware of the influence it might have on Spanish-American relations and with Spain's South American colonies. Rush told Secretary of State John Quincy Adams that the Spanish revolution attracted great interest in England, in particular from merchants. British merchants urged the government to follow America's lead and recognise the rebel states. Rush concluded that despite British silence, their actions – opening their ports to the new states – spoke more loudly than words. But Britain, he concluded, had to consult with its Congress of Vienna allies before recognising the new republics, and as things stood it seemed unlikely that Britain would grant formal recognition soon. A Colombian representative asked Lord Londonderry to recognise the new state, but Londonderry rejected the proposal and cited Britain's European

² Hugh Popham, *A Damned Cunning Fellow: The Eventful Life of Rear-Admiral Sir Home Popham, KCB, KCH, KM, FRS, 1762-1820* (Cornwall: Old Ferry Press, 1991), 1-5 and 166-175.

³ Webster, (ed.), *SDFOA*, 8-11 and Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States*, 203.

commitments. Echeverria, a Colombian representative, told Rush that Londonderry surmised that the US was able to recognise the independence of the South American states because it was “freed from the incu[m]brance] of the Holy Alliance.” But the British press, merchants, and parliamentary leaders voiced increasingly loud concerns over the spring and summer of 1822 that Britain was not taking enough action against the pirates and privateers that the turmoil had spawned. Rush concluded that it was unlikely Britain could hold out much longer against this commercial interest aggregation.⁴

The British did not want to provoke Spain or her allies and was reluctant to take aggressive actions, especially against Spanish privateers. But Britain still wanted to paint Spain as weak to heighten the stature of the rebels and increase the acceptability of recognition at home. Thus, London sat on the fence and British merchants and newspaper correspondents complained that the government’s attitude hurt British trade and honour because the US Navy used the force that the proud Royal Navy should be using. The disordered state of the West Indies and the growth of piracy began to hurt the British trade that George Canning, Foreign Secretary, wanted expanded. He told the Duke of Wellington that the conflict had “let loose a multitude of pirates and buccaneers, who lurk on the coasts and in the harbours of the Spanish Colonies.” The pirates hid in Spanish controlled territory, yet because of his overall strategy, Canning was reluctant to take forceful actions. He told Wellington that Britain should accept Spanish weakness, press them no further, and only take actions against pirates “where we experience the evil[.]”⁵ Weak Spanish control of Cuba suited British goals best if Britain could not have the island herself.

⁴ United States, National Archives (NA), Record Group (RG) 59, General Records of the Department of State, Dispatches from United States Ministers to Great Britain, 1791-1906 (hereafter, Dispatches, Britain), no. 116, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 19 March 1820, no. 251, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 10 June 1822, no. 254, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 24 June 1822, and no. 257, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 24 July 1822.

⁵ PRO, FO 92/48, reprint in SDFOA, vol. 2, 73-75, George Canning to the Duke of Wellington (No. 4), 27 September 1822 and George Canning to the Duke of Wellington (No. 9), 15 October 1822.

Canning, once Foreign Secretary during the French Wars, later replaced Lord Castlereagh, again as Foreign Secretary. Canning opposed the Grand Alliance and the concert of Europe. He espoused an “English” policy as opposed to a “European” one. He wanted to spur each nation to act on their own, then use British power at the right moment to secure British objectives. Canning wished to recognise the rebel Spanish-American states, gain access to their markets, use them to counter growing American military and economic power, and bring them onto Britain’s side if they were needed strategically. At the Congress of Verona (1822), Canning told Wellington not to support any interference in Spain by the other European powers. Canning wanted Cabinet, which included many members who were strongly anti-revolutionary, to support his move and as part of his plan voiced his annoyance at Spain for its disruption of British trade in the Gulf of Mexico. By November, painting Spain as the guilty party, he told Cabinet that Spain had refused to co-operate and that Britain needed a naval force to protect British shipping from further attack.⁶ Canning felt it was good to show that Spain was weak, allowing privateers and pirates to run free, so that Cabinet would be more likely to support the rebels.

US Policy against Pirates and Privateers

American policy toward the rebel Spanish colonies was simpler than Britain’s policy, but market expansion remained the objective through diplomatic initiatives. The US Executive’s primary goal was to convince the Spanish to recognise American possession of East Florida and Texas. John Quincy Adams, President James Monroe’s Secretary of State, became the primary negotiator. His work led to the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 under which Spain recognised American control of Florida in exchange for \$5.5 million in compensation, while the Americans abandoned claims to Texas.

⁶ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 42-45 and William W. Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America, 1804-1828* (New Jersey: Yale University Press, 1951, reprint Archon Books, 1967), 136-144.

Henry Clay continued to press for American recognition of the rebel states, and as speaker of the House of Representatives, he wielded influence. Adams held his ground, but when the Spanish wanted the Americans to rule out recognition, Adams replied that it would violate American neutrality to take any position. By 1820, the liberal revolution enveloped Spain and within a year, Spain capitulated on the Florida treaty. On 4 July 1821, Adams, his goals met, recommended to President Monroe that Congress recognise the new states. By May 1822, Congress appropriated funds for American diplomatic missions, and within the next four years Colombia, Mexico, the Central American Confederation, the United Provinces of La Plata, Chile, and Peru received various levels of recognition. From 1826 to 1856, the United States and the various new nations signed treaties of commerce and amity that provided for the appointment of consuls and most-favoured-nation trading status.⁷

When Spanish-American territories began to revolt against their colonial overseer, it caught American commerce in the crossfire. In response to the growing threat Washington sent naval forces into the region and enacted anti-piracy legislation on 3 March 1819. The 1819 Act authorised the President to send warships to protect American shipping from pirates. American commanders were authorised to capture any armed ship and crew which committed any piracy against an American or foreign vessel, deliver it into an American port for trial, and free any American ship held by pirates. The courts were authorised to sell the pirate ships once condemned, while those convicted of piracy could face the death penalty.⁸

⁷ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 364 and 372-374; Wesley P. Newton, "Origins of United States-Latin American Relations," in T. Ray Shurbutt, (ed.), *United States-Latin American Relations, 1800-1850: The Formative Generations* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 20-23; and Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States*, 201.

⁸ United States, *Register of Debates*, 18th Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, 31 January 1825, 49, "Report of the Committee of Foreign Relations of the House of Representatives, on Piracy and Outrages on American Commerce by Spanish Privateers" and United States, *U.S. Statutes at Large* (hereafter, *Statutes at Large*), vol. 3, 510-514 and 600.

During the early stages of the revolutions, the US Navy only undertook limited policing efforts to counter the piracy that erupted. By 2 March 1822, Congress, concerned about US coastwise trade, concluded that “the intercourse between the Northern and Southern sections of the Union, by sea, is almost cut off.” On 6 December 1822, Monroe wrote to the House of Representatives and reported on the increased activities of Caribbean pirates. The President believed that the navy needed a strong force that could operate in the shallow waters where the pirates hid. The House resolved into a committee of the whole to discuss legislation to authorise the President to fight West Indian pirates.⁹

Representative Gideon Tomlinson, an “Anti-Jacksonite” from Connecticut, supported the proposal to improve the navy. He told the House that growing American trade gave the nation its resources and it deserved the navy’s defence. The new Act authorised the President to purchase and deploy those ships he deemed necessary to protect US shipping against pirates in “the Gulf of Mexico, and the Seas and territories adjacent.” For such purpose, Congress allocated \$160,000. Despite ongoing debates, new ships were authorised and Congress made the temporary 1819 Act permanent on 30 January 1823, with little discussion.¹⁰ While American tradition historically abhorred a strong naval and military force, this gave way when American economic concerns were directly threatened. With Congress firmly behind the Executive, the Navy Department tasked one of the most famous American naval commanders, Commodore David Porter, to suppress pirates and privateers.

⁹ United States, *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 1173-1175, House, 2 March 1822; *Advocate*, reprint in *American Commercial and Daily Advertiser* (hereafter *ACDA*), 7 March 1822, 2, column c; *ACDA*, 4 April 1822, 2, column d and e; and United States, *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 349 and 371, House, 7 December 1822, President James Monroe to the House of Representatives of the United States, 6 December 1822.

¹⁰ United States, *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 371-381, House, 7 December 1822 and 33-35, Senate, 16 December 1822; and *Statutes at Large*, vol. 3, 720-721.

British Manoeuvres and Anglo-American Diplomacy

While the Americans “quickly” settled on a policy with respect to the pirates, Canning fell under greater pressure to do the same. *The Times*, “appealed to a wide spectrum of middle- and upper-class opinion[,]” was often influenced by the political elite, and is an important “mirror of British governing-class attitudes.”¹¹ In early October 1822, it concluded that London had failed to take enough action against piracy. Significantly, the editorial asserted that the minister responsible had forsaken the people’s trust, merchants had suffered, and British trade in the West Indies was damaged.¹² In November 1822, Canning, under pressure, took a firmer stand.

He told Cabinet on 15 November that he feared that if Cuba was seized by any power – like the United States – it would give that power the ability to choke British trade to Jamaica, especially if war erupted. Canning concluded that the best way to protect British interests in the region was to settle the problems between Spain and her rebel colonies. He recommended that the government install civil agents in the various Spanish-American ports, and continue efforts to protect British trade. Spain, he wrote, would force Britain to abandon its neutral stance by seizing British ships simply for trading with the rebel colonies. The revolution in Spain was no reason to be soft.¹³ But Canning had insufficient support to go further and was forced to declare British neutrality. He virtually gave France permission to invade Spain, but warned her to stay out of Portugal. On 6 April 1823, the French acted, swiftly overran Spain, and restored King Ferdinand to the throne.¹⁴

Behind the scenes, the British took a stronger diplomatic stand against Spain by threatening to use the Royal Navy. In early 1823, Cabinet prepared to send a fresh

¹¹ Crawford, *Anglo-American Crisis*, 17-19.

¹² *The Times* (London), 5 October 1822, 2, column d, 8 October 1822, 2, column c.

¹³ PRO, FO 72/266, reprinted in SDFOA, vol. 2, 393-398, “Canning’s Memorandum for the Cabinet,” 15 November 1822.

¹⁴ Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America*, 144-148.

squadron to the West Indies to seize Spanish ships in reprisal for continued Spanish operations against British shipping. Richard Rush asserted that when Spain became aware of British intentions, she acquiesced and released British ships. Rush concluded that Britain's handling of the affair was "considered as the first decided act of Mr. Canning's foreign administration[.]" He recommended that other powers should remember the British tactic if they ever came to blows with the great power.¹⁵ Rather than fight American designs, Canning endeavoured to make her an ally against a French incursion into Latin America.

During the summer and autumn of 1823, the British and Americans discussed their Caribbean strategies. While they failed to agree to a joint position, they reached an understanding and assured each other their designs were honourable. The Americans were worried that France might seize Spanish colonies. Rush told Canning that he hoped that the British would prevent it if that was the French intention. Canning replied that he believed the French would refrain from such action, but he hoped that the British and Americans could formulate a common policy to counter the French. Meanwhile, the British agreed they would do nothing to stop the colonial rebellions, but Rush was unable to press Canning for a stronger declaration of support, and talks stalled. The White House would only agree to a joint position if the British first recognised the rebels' independence, something Canning was unwilling to do for fear of tipping his hand too early to the Concert of Europe. Nevertheless, Rush assured Britain that the Americans had no desire to seize the colonies either.¹⁶

Balancing his loyalties, Canning decided to give France another chance, met French representative Prince de Polignac from 3-12 October 1823, and secured France's

¹⁵ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 289, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 17 January 1823.

¹⁶ PRO, FO 5/176, reprint in SDFOA, vol. 2, 45-496, Stratford Canning to George Canning (No. 56, Confidential), [date unclear]; NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 323, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 19 August 1823, no. 325, Richard Rush to George Canning, 23 August 1823, no. 330, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 8 September 1823 and no. 331, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 19 September 1823.

commitment to stay out of Spanish-American affairs. Next, Canning wanted to conceal that he was actually plotting against the Europeans; in this, Rush was his Achilles' heel.¹⁷ Rush believed that Britain was more worried about containing France than anything that was happening in Spanish America and used the United States for its own strategic ends. He believed the British Cabinet wanted the constitutional system of Spain to collapse, but only if its ramifications did not harm "British interests and British ambition." As for the naval situation in the West Indies, Canning informed Rush that orders were about to be issued to the squadron to protect British trading interests. The squadron was authorised to retaliate against Spain if Spanish orders to refrain from attacking British shipping were not renewed. Canning told Rush that Britain was taking a similar stand with Colombia and wanted reparations for attacks on British shipping. If the British failed to see results, they would blockade a Colombian port in response. Britain wanted America to communicate the threat.¹⁸

The Monroe Doctrine

The Americans also went their own way by the end of 1823. Having already established a trading outpost near San Francisco in 1816, the Russians declared ownership of the entire coast in 1821 and professed that they would bar anyone from fishing or trading anywhere down the coast to 51° North. The Americans, probably as a warning, told the Russians that Washington would not stand idly by if a European power, other than Spain, tried to re-arrange or restore any Spanish territories within the Americas. Within the context of Russian moves and the break-up of the Spanish-American Empire, Monroe issued his famous speech of 2 December 1823 that later became known as the Monroe Doctrine. It warned the European powers to stay out of the Americas. He meant the declaration as a warning to Russia and Europe against interference in South

¹⁷ Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America*, 156-158 and NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 336, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 10 October 1823.

¹⁸ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 336, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 10 October

America. European reaction was mute, although by 1824 the Russians and Americans agreed to set the Alaska boundary at 54°40" North.¹⁹ But the doctrine was significant because it declared the Americas in the economic and strategic sphere of the United States.

Canning tolerated Monroe's declaration of American control of the region because at the time it embodied Canning's other goal to keep other European powers out of the region while advancing British interests. Still, he was upset at Monroe's declaration of American hegemony. Canning asked how America could declare such a thing when "America's geographic limits were actually unknown[.]" Nevertheless, the British moved forward, rather than focus on a matter of semantics with the Americans. By early February 1824, Britain was prepared to recognise Spanish-American independence; she would only do so after Spain. Rush concluded that Britain would eventually take the "more direct and consistent course of the United States" towards the rebel states.²⁰

In Europe, Canning tried to put forward the Polignac Memorandum as the prelude to Monroe's declaration. For their part, the other powers largely ignored Monroe's statements. The French proposed the establishment of Bourbon monarchies in Spanish America, and after 1823 thought that the US should be excluded from any conferences on the issue. Dexter Perkins concluded that Monroe's statement spurred the British to a more active policy in the region, but the doctrine's real significance lay in the future. Publicly, Canning denied that the British and Americans were secretly co-operating over Latin American affairs, but he stopped trying to quell discussions of his

1823.

¹⁹ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 375; Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States*, 205-208; and Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1826* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, reprint 1965), 3-17.

²⁰ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 354, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 27 December 1823; Canning in Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 379; Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 376-378; Perkins, *Monroe Doctrine*, 17-32; and NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 361, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 9 February 1824.

talks with Rush. In South America, Canning managed to swing opinion to Britain's side as the influence behind Monroe's statements. Britain's stock rose in Latin American eyes and Canning's next plan was to disrupt the European Alliance. In the end, the other European powers remained split on the status of Latin America, so Canning decided to act over the following eight months. He wanted to be sure that recognition of rebel colonial states would not come back to haunt Britain, and that they were significantly pro-British to make recognition profitable.²¹

After a British commission to Mexico, Colombia, and Buenos Aires reported they were sympathetic to the British who had established businesses there, Lord Liverpool brought forward a proposal to recognise Mexico and Colombia by November 1824. In establishing formal diplomatic relations, Britain would not seek special commercial treatment. The states were pleased, and Mexico, Colombia, and Buenos Aires entered into trade treaties with the British, although the final treaty was not signed until 1827. The result was a temporary boom in Latin American investment. Canning was cautious in his foreign policy decisions and preferred to wait until both public opinion, and diplomatic conditions, were such that all would support a policy decision that would be successful.²²

US Naval Retrenchment

In the United States, by 1825, reports of piracy against US shipping declined and so did American interest in co-operation with Britain over a common policy. President Monroe believed that the United States should use greater force against the pirates, but the co-operation of Spanish and Cuban authorities should be secured. The President concluded that the options available to the United States were to pursue the pirates onto foreign

²¹ Perkins, *Monroe Doctrine*, 142-143, 248 and 260 and Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America*, 165-175.

²² NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 412, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 30 December 1824 and Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America*, 175-181. For the nuances of Canning's foreign policy, see Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 447-475.

territory; make reprisals against the property owned by residents where the pirates hid; or blockade Cuban ports known to contain pirates.²³ When debate resumed in Congress about appropriations for 1825 anti-piracy duties, it quickly centred on whether the United States even needed a navy. Congress agreed to continued American naval efforts in the Gulf, but at a price.

In the final analysis, “the present was a bill for the suppression of piracy, and not for the increase of the Navy.” In rebuttal, Representative Daniel Webster, “Anti-Jacksonian” from Massachusetts, told the House that if the British were able to have 80 to 100 large ships deployed variously around the world, surely the United States could build at least ten new ships. The final version of the Bill became a compromise between those who still supported a strong navy, and those who believed its time had passed. Section two stipulated that the President “is hereby authorized to cause to be sold ... as he shall judge best for the public interest, the whole, or a part, of the vessels which were purchased under the authority of the act[.]” Finally, in late 1825, Canning tried to initiate a tripartite agreement between France, the United States, and Britain, respecting piracy suppression and Cuba. Canning intended to maintain the status quo over strategically important Cuba, and assure Spain that no one would take advantage of situation to occupy it or any remaining Spanish possessions. But the other countries declared that such a statement was now unnecessary; the crisis had ended.²⁴

²³ United States, *Register of Debates*, 18th Cong., 2nd sess., 198-199, 13 January 1825, James Monroe to the Senate of the United States.

²⁴ United States, *Register of Debates*, 18th Cong., 2nd sess., 729-732, House, 1 March 1825; Statutes at Large, vol. 4, 131, “An Act to Authorize the building of ten sloops of war, and for other purposes[;]” PRO, FO 27/328, reprinted in SDFOA, 194-195, George Canning to Viscount Granville (No. 58), 23 August 1825 and “Projêt of an Engagement either Tripartite or Between (1) France and England, (2) England and the United States, and (3) The United States and France;” and NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 3, Rufus King to George Canning, 24 August 1825 in Rufus King to H. Clay, 24 August 1825.

Britain Achieves Dominance

Canning's policy toward Latin America was to use trade and influence to obtain regional support. He avoided direct alliances or naval power to advance British trade, and sought to keep rivals from gaining a strategic foothold. The British finally checked the Americans at the Panama Congress in 1826 which was called to discuss an American confederation, maritime rights, the Monroe Doctrine, Puerto Rico and Cuba. As the Americans became bogged down in domestic squabbles over Latin American policy, the British used their influence to mould events. The Americans were left virtually impotent and Canning achieved a similar result as he had with the European Alliance. The United States was expected to attend, and Adams favoured sending representatives. The British selected Edward J. Dawkins in March 1826 as their representative and ordered him to advocate that the conference embrace British maritime law. Kaufmann concluded that Dawkins' suggestions "came to nought, but thereafter such was the moral pre-eminence of Great Britain that the United States fell into a dark and chilling shade." US Ambassador Albert Gallatin observed in 1827 that the British intended to continue naval operations from Kingston, Jamaica, but also make Bermuda an important naval station. In the end, Webster asserted, "Canning had completely established British influence in Hispanic-America." Britain had more capital, a global trade network, and her "navy was far more important and much more in evidence."²⁵

The result was that the US concluded that London had succeeded in consolidating its commercial interests. By the early 1830s, tension between the United States and Mexico was increasing. The Americans assured the British that they did not intend to occupy any part of Mexico, and that territory would only be transferred by sale if both nations agreed. American "squatters," however, had started to occupy the border

²⁵ Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America*, 202-217; NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 57, Albert Gallatin to Henry Clay, 13 February 1827; and Webster, *Britain and the Independence of Latin America*, 52.

region. Louis McLane, American ambassador to Britain, attune to British gentlemanly interests, believed that British commercial and mining interests in Mexico and “a disposition to limit our control in the gulf of Mexico” put pressure on the British government to ensure that “European policy [was] predominant in the New American states, and more especially in Mexico[.]” He further opined that, “the supposed dependence of the Mexican government upon the interference and protection of Great Britain against Spanish aggression, gives to the People and government of this country [Britain] an influence which, if there be the disposition, may be exerted most prejudicially to our future relations.”²⁶

British and American Slave Trade Policy

While Britain and America had similar goals in the equatorial Atlantic, there remained an undercurrent of economic and diplomatic tension. Such tension increased over the simultaneous issue of slave trade suppression. While the British wavered on policing piracy in the Gulf for strategic reasons, their policy against the slave trade was clearer and they began using sea power to further their long-term objective of slave trade suppression. But Washington feared that London wanted to restrict American freedom of the seas, although Britain hoped to convince the Americans to help suppress the slave trade. When the latter became impossible because of American domestic concerns, Washington used its commitment to piracy suppression to placate the British and deal with West African interests and slave trade suppression. Rather than fight over slave trade suppression, both sides sought mitigation of their dispute so they could further their separate economic objectives.

The British campaign against the slave trade began as a humanitarian enterprise that then acquired economic and strategic overtones as Britain sought to institute an “informal” empire to feed her industrial growth. London mounted a lone campaign to

²⁶ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 18, Louis McLane to Martin Van Buren, 21 May 1830.

end slavery and the slave trade. Meanwhile, Africa took on a trade importance to Britain that rivalled British North America. While slave-produced products were interrupted during the American Revolutionary War, for example, slavery continued to be a vital part of the British colonial economy when, it seemed, Parliament suddenly decided to abolish the practice. British slave-grown goods like coffee and sugar remained competitive with those grown by the colonies of other nations, like Cuba and Brazil, until the British ended their use of slaves. David Eltis concluded that Britain, in particular the merchant and landed-gentry classes, for economic reasons, should have campaigned for the continuance of slavery and the slave trade, but instead committed econocide.²⁷

Ideas were important in this age and the shift in British opinion against the slave trade emerged. The slow shift in British political opinion resulted from the rise of published ideas from the Enlightenment. Seymour Drescher concluded that a change in mentality caused the abolition movement. He argued that support for abolition came from the preconditioned mind of newly industrialised Northern England. Northern workers were predisposed to be sympathetic to those, like the Africans, who were also separated from their families. The people of Manchester, for example, submitted 101 petitions to Parliament without first being organised by a lobbying committee. In contrast, at the same time, Liverpool, involved in the slave trade at many levels, failed to respond. Manchester's support for abolition came in the face of facts that the city's exports largely went to regions whose economies depended on money generated by slave-supported industries.²⁸

²⁷ David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4-6.

²⁸ Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 67-87. See also, Drescher, "Whose Abolition? Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave Trade," *Past & Present*, 143 (May 1994): 136-166.

Crusaders like William Wilberforce, MP from Hull, then took up the cause in Parliament. Ending the slave trade would be good for Britain and would encourage the development of “a self-sustaining labor force” in the colonies that would buy British goods and expand the home economy. A colony was proposed in 1787 for Sierra Leone for freed slaves and under the plan the British government would pay £12 per black. On 1 May 1807, Parliament passed a Bill outlawing the slave trade, and the last legal slaver, James de Wolf, turned his financial attention to textiles.²⁹ British involvement in West Africa had begun and so had the intertwining of humanitarian and economic motives.

The demise of the slave trade coincided with a realignment of the capital-labour relationship within Britain. The British applied *laissez-faire* market principles to the British labour market and they linked productivity, wages, and consumerism in a more modern fashion. The ideology of the utilitarian and British Evangelicals formed a nexus whereupon Africa and the slave trade was conceptualised as another mechanism that could be destroyed in favour of the free-market economy and free labour. By the 1830s, coinciding with first Reform Bill, support for abolition shifted from the working class to the emergent middle class.³⁰ There arose the belief that free labour was simply better.

With slavery and the slave trade banned at home and in the colonies by 1833, the problem for London was stopping the slave trade of other powers that fuelled competition from slave-produced goods. In this era of peace and a war-wary Europe, liberal Britain could hardly go to war to suppress the slave trade. Instead, the British undertook a diplomatic policy to persuade other powers to end and suppress their slave trade, or give Britain the authority to do so. London attempted to secure treaties with other countries whereby ships of each nation could be stopped and inspected to assess if they were involved in the slave trade. The British preferred a mutual right of search treaty because it gave them the most flexibility to do as they pleased. Suspected slavers

²⁹ Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 494-498, and 539-556.

³⁰ Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 18-21 and Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 153.

were tried at Mixed Commission courts and if found guilty the vessels broken up. The British signed such treaties with the Netherlands (1822), Sweden (1824), Brazil (1826), Norway and Spain (1835), and Portugal (1842).³¹

This system would have been effective, but slavers switched flags as they moved from treaty-country to non-treaty country. Rather than sign a mutual right of search treaty, the French agreed to station warships off West Africa to intercept slavers under their flag. During the 1840s, the British signed similar treaties with the Portuguese who sent up to six warships to the West African coast. In all, the slavers faced a combined naval force of up to sixty warships.³² The main British problem was with the United States. The Southern States were a slave economy and thus the Federal government was wary about an overseas commitment to suppress the slave trade. Meanwhile, they feared British interference with its growing sea trade if they granted the British the right to police the slave trade on their behalf. British and American economic goals conflicted and increased Anglo-American tension.

Slavery had existed in the United States from before the Revolutionary War. From 1774 to 1776, with American colonies in rebellion, the US Continental Congress restricted the importation of slaves. When Thomas Jefferson wrote his first draft of the Declaration of Independence, he condemned slavery, but under pressure from Georgia and South Carolina, the final draft of the Declaration and the Articles of Confederation failed to condemn the slave trade. As one of the first of many compromises, the Constitution declared that Congress was forbidden to end the slave trade until 1807, but it could impose duties, no more than \$10 per slave, on slave imports. But it was left to individual States to decide upon the slave trade under their jurisdiction.³³ Henceforth,

³¹ Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 85-86.

³² Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 86-88.

³³ Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 478-482 and 499-501.

slavery issues were controversial matters of States' rights that the Federal government had to consider when making policy.

The process of outlawing the slave trade in the United States was therefore gradual, conservative, rather than a radical change that might threaten the Union.³⁴ On 22 March 1794, for example, Congress passed a law that forbade any citizen or resident of the United States from equipping ships to buy and import slaves – they could lose their ship and receive a fine. On 3 April 1798, the law was extended to include the Mississippi territory, whereby slave importation henceforth was forbidden under threat of large fines, and any new slave imported would be freed. Americans were also banned from serving on vessels, both American and foreign, engaged in slave transportation between other countries. This same Act also authorised the nascent US Navy to “seize vessels and crews employed contrary to the act.” In December 1806, President Thomas Jefferson reminded Congress that the 1807 deadline for a decision on the slave trade was approaching. Legislation to abolish the trade was signed into law on 2 March with 1 January 1808 the deadline when importing slaves into the United States would become illegal. The legislation contained provisions to ban Americans from outfitting slavers, and imposed fines, but contained no enforcement provisions.³⁵

Nevertheless, slaves, for example, were still landed at independent Texas, then imported into the United States. Similar practices occurred in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia. Meanwhile, Baltimore shipbuilders, such as Stewart and Plunkett, supplied ships for the trade, and American firms insured slave ventures. In Washington, support for active measures to suppress the trade lagged. The Secretary of the Navy, Paul

³⁴ David Brion Davis, “The Uncertain Antislavery Commitment of Thomas Jefferson,” in Lawrence B. Goodheart, Richard D. Brown, and Stephen G. Rabe, *Slavery in American Society*, 3rd Edition (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1976), 83-95.

³⁵ Irish University Press, *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers: Papers Relating to Slavery and the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 95 vols., (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1968-71), (hereafter, IUP, vol. no., class title, class pages, and document), vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, II, 2-3, “Report of the Committee to which was referred so much of the President’s Message as relates to the Slave Trade,” 9 February 1821 and Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 544-552.

Hamilton, was a slave owner and when he wrote to Charleston's senior naval officer, he seemed less than concerned about the trade. President Madison, for his part, asked Congress to consider greater means to enforce America's anti-slave trade laws. But in the end, the 1807 Act only banned the international slave trade, did nothing about the domestic slave trade, and it was virtually impossible to prove slave origins. Once in the United States, slaves were often shipped to Charleston or New Orleans, where they were sold. The *Virginia Times* estimated that 40,000 slaves were sold in 1835 alone. In the interim, Americans continued their involvement in the Brazilian and Cuban slave trades. Du Bois found that enforcement of US anti-slave trade laws in the Gulf of Mexico shortly after the War of 1812 was poor. Despite reports from government officials in the region, Washington only dispatched some revenue cutters in the late 1810s to suppress piracy from Amelia Island. When slavers were captured in the region, it was largely because of coincidence.³⁶

Early Anglo-American Slave-Trade Diplomacy

Early joint Anglo-American efforts against the slave trade foundered because it was incompatible with American domestic interests and goals for sea power. While Washington wanted to meet some of Britain's concerns, there were domestic constraints on American policy. Washington feared that agreeing to British demands would interfere with American trade protection objectives. Such concerns dominated American focus at the political and naval levels. The White House tried to reconcile the differences between American and British policy through attempts to meet the British halfway on a mutual right of search treaty. But the White House was wary of a formal naval commitment for West Africa, a region far removed from American commercial interests during a time of national trepidation over slavery issues. Instead, Washington committed to a minimal West African naval deployment, as part of the West Indies anti-piracy patrol, and hoped it would protect American interests and reduce British

³⁶ Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, 116 and Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 569-572.

criticism. Meanwhile, Britain declared that she would use only diplomacy to persuade other powers to suppress the slave trade, rather than upset their national sensibilities with overt displays of naval force. Both nations sought to minimise potential disputes, rather than exacerbate them.

On 12 May 1816, Adams, in his capacity as US Ambassador to Britain, met with Castlereagh to discuss the Barbary Powers. Castlereagh commented that he was unable to convince Portugal and Spain, but would not go to war with those powers over the matter of the African slave trade. He also warned the Barbary Powers that Britain would leave them alone “so long as they never applied it [slavery] to her [Britain’s] subjects[.]”³⁷ By 21 August 1816, the British wanted all Christian slaves released and told the Barbary Powers they were in a state of war with the British. But Castlereagh told Adams that the British were apprehensive about deploying a major naval force to the region because the other powers were jealous of British naval strength. The British were willing, instead, to co-operate with other powers over issues of mutual concern.³⁸

But co-operation with the Americans over slave trade suppression stagnated. During a meeting on 23 December, Castlereagh observed that slavers still operated out of Southern US ports under Spanish and Portuguese flags. He suggested that the powers that had abolished the slave trade, like the United States and Britain, should use their naval forces co-operatively to arrest slavers that flew the flags of any nation that had banned the slave trade: the mutual right of search. Castlereagh admitted that it was not his “intention to propose that the United States should take part in this system,” and so Adams, wary of such proposals, refrained from giving an opinion.³⁹ During 1817, Adams met William Wilberforce, acknowledged Wilberforce’s influence in Parliament,

³⁷ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams: Comprising Portions of his Diary from 1795 to 1848*, 10 vols., vol. 3, 12 May 1816. Charles Francis Adams, (ed.) (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, reprint 1969), 358-359, (hereafter, *Memoirs* and volume number).

³⁸ John Quincy Adams, 21 August 1816, *Memoirs*, vol. 3, 427-428.

³⁹ John Quincy Adams, 23 December 1816, *Memoirs*, vol. 3, 454-455.

but concluded that Britain's right of search proposals were just an attempt to obtain in peacetime the right of search that they abused during the late war.⁴⁰ Initial hopes for joint Anglo-American policing operations against the slave trade died. The Americans voiced renewed objections to British claims of right of search, still a sore point after the War of 1812.

The Americans continually rejected calls from the British to join a bilateral anti-slave trade treaty for a number of reasons. The US believed in total freedom of the seas, whereas the British thought that there should be limitations. The British believed that freedom of the seas only applied to legal trade and that those suspected of being involved in illegal activities, or flying suspicious flags, could be stopped. The Americans believed that their vessels were to be left alone no matter what they were doing, although they agreed that piracy and slaving were wrong. Christopher Lloyd concluded that the Americans had in essence "extended the Monroe doctrine to cover their trading vessels at sea. No interference on the part of a European power was admissible[.]"⁴¹ John Quincy Adams exclaimed that if any American vessels were stopped by another nation in peacetime it would meet with "universal repugnance" by the American public. The Americans believed in the "freedom of the seas" and felt it was in Britain's nature to restrict such American freedom with impressment, as during the War of 1812. But the British countered that any slave trade treaty would be reciprocal, revocable, and limited to "specified coasts and a definite number of [war] ships." If any party objected to the arrangement, they could simply abandon it rather than sour their relations or go to war.⁴²

⁴⁰ John Quincy Adams, 6 June 1817, *Memoirs*, vol. 3, 556-558.

⁴¹ Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1949, reprint 1968), 51.

⁴² Hugh Graham Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave Trade in Anglo-American Relations, 1814-1862* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), 7-9 and 15-19.

The Americans rested assured that the High Court of Admiralty's ruling on the case of the French slave ship, *Le Louis*, restricted London's peacetime use of sea power. The *Queen Charlotte*, a Sierra Leone colonial warship, captured *Le Louis* on 30 January 1816 near Cape Mesurado, Africa. Judge Sir William Scott believed that the condemnation of the ship rested on the legality of the visitation, because the captain of the warship had no way of knowing if there were slaves on board unless he stopped and searched *Le Louis*. The judge ruled that there was no provision in the law of nations for the visit, search, and seizure of a vessel in peacetime. The simple statement of France that they had abolished the slave trade was insufficient legal authority for another nation's warship to seize *Le Louis*. Meanwhile, the only law that banned the importation of slaves into French colonies dated from January 1817; it was prospective and therefore inapplicable to *Le Louis*, seized in 1816.⁴³ Because of this ruling, the British had to seek agreements with other countries to search their ships for slaves, or risk war.

America's Minimalist African policy and the 1819 Anti-Slave Trade Act

However, Anglo-American treaty talks continually failed over the right of search and the White House moved forward with unilateral action to protect and promote American interests. As in their diplomatic talks over a Gulf of Mexico policy, negotiations over the slave trade languished under the burden of divergent policies. The United States was a hybrid nation with slaveholding regions in the South and regions containing free blacks that many feared would ruin the nation. The divisive slavery issue, and slavery's status in new American territories like Missouri, prevented the administration from taking decisive action against the slave trade for fear of causing domestic turmoil. Instead, Washington made decisions that could be supported domestically. They decided on minimal naval deployment to the West African coast to support "privately"

⁴³ IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, II, 9-11, "Case of the French Slave Ship *Le Louis*["] A good introduction to prize law is Donald A. Petrie, *The Prize Game: Lawful Looting on the High Seas in the Days of Fighting Sail* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999).

run American colonies that repatriated freed Africans. It initiated American West African economic interests and provided a naval presence that Washington could also use to placate British concerns.

In the early 1800s, slave revolts fomented fear among the slaveholding class that slavery and movements for abolition would undermine their society. They felt a way was needed to rid their territory of free blacks that, so many in the South believed, were the source of agitation.⁴⁴ Pressure from organisations like the American Colonisation Society (ACS), who wished freed slaves repatriated to Africa, helped carry forward a minimal African commitment that could be achieved politically. The US Navy acted in support of the colonisation efforts and only detached the occasional ship from the West Indies piracy patrol to the West African coast.⁴⁵ American legislative action during 1819 is significant because naval efforts along the West African coast began as an indirect method of providing government support to private American colonisation societies using the 1819 Anti-Slave Trade Act. But as will be revealed in the next chapter, when piracy was suppressed, the US Navy retrenched, and Americans along West Africa noticed the British as sole arbiter.

In 1816, the ACS formed to promote the repatriation of freed Africans and colonisation. The Society devised a scheme to resettle Africans in a colony similar to that established by the British at Sierra Leone. The movement's leader, Reverend Robert Finley, hoped that wealthy Americans and the government would finance, promoted, and protect the settlement. He believed that the United States could become the flag-bearer of Christianity in Africa. But the First Annual Report of the ACS also revealed the more sinister goal of ridding America of an idle "vicious and mischievous" race of freed blacks. The Society gained many high-profile supporters, like Henry Clay,

⁴⁴ David M. Streifford, "The American Colonization Society: An Application of Republican Ideology to Early Antebellum Reform," *The Journal of Southern History*, 45:2 (May 1979): 202-207 and Amos J. Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective, 1822-1900* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 2-6.

⁴⁵ Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, 98.

speaker of the House, Daniel Webster, then Congressman from New Hampshire and naval advocate, and James Monroe.⁴⁶ In January 1817, the Society asked Congress to help support its colonisation efforts, but shied away from mention of slavery. Yet Congress wavered and feared a free black settlement on the African coast would generate conflict with other powers.⁴⁷

The Society had a supporter in Congress, Representative Charles Mercer, who introduced the new anti-slave trade Bill in March 1819. The Bill proposed that the Federal government would assume the task of policing the slave trade. It passed with relatively little debate especially compared to the anti-piracy legislation that was introduced and passed at the same time.⁴⁸ The 1819 Act gave the President the power to send American warships wherever they were needed to fight the slave trade, in particular along the African coast. Commanders were ordered to capture any vessel that had slaves on board or was outfitted for the slave trade in violation of the 1808 anti-slave trade law, and bring them into an American port. The 1819 Act also gave the President the power to deport any freed slaves and appoint agents to oversee operations. To accomplish the goals of the legislation, Congress allotted \$100,000.⁴⁹

Monroe's Compromise

President Monroe used the provisions of the 1819 Act to support the ACS with the US Navy, and provide an American presence along West Africa. Before the War of 1812, along with William Pinkney, Monroe had negotiated an agreement with the British that

⁴⁶ P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 12-34; Beyan, *American Colonization Society*, 2-6; and Streifford, "American Colonization Society," 201-209.

⁴⁷ United States, *Annals of Congress*, 14th Cong., 2nd sess., 481-483, House, 14 January 1817, B. Washington, President, ACS, "To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States ..." and United States, *Annals of Congress*, 14th Cong., 2nd sess., 939-940, House, 11 February 1817.

⁴⁸ United States, *Annals of Congress*, 15th Cong., 1st sess., 1771-1774, House, 18 April 1818; Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 48-51; and United States, *Annals of Congress*, 15th Cong., 2nd sess., 1430-1431, House, 1 March 1819.

⁴⁹ Statutes at Large, vol. 3, 532-533.

would have resolved wartime trade and blockade issues. But an uncompromising President Jefferson summarily rejected the Monroe-Pinkney Treaty. During the war, Monroe served as Secretary of State, acting Secretary of War, and remained wary of British motives over trade issues and maritime rights.⁵⁰ Consequently, when Anglo-American talks for further US action against the slave trade failed, President Monroe's minimal support became American policy until 1842. Through this Act the White House delegated responsibility for freed slaves largely to the ACS, while Washington provided the Society with a minimal level of naval support. This policy met the mood of the nation and the President's style of leadership. In the era of the "Missouri Compromise" and increasing tension between North and South, such a policy was all that the White House could accomplish. Monroe, while listening to other people's opinion, was a supervisor of affairs, but he was also the final arbiter, especially with foreign affairs. When matters like the Missouri Compromise divided Cabinet, Monroe took his own course and worked with Congress.⁵¹

The Missouri Compromise reveals the pressures that Monroe's government was under during the period. Northern members saw the slavery issue as a national problem, while members from slave holding States believed that how a State organised itself, slavery or otherwise, was its own responsibility. A national debate followed that threatened to destroy the Union. Privately, in correspondence of 10 January 1820, the President expressed his desire that no new States be admitted to the Union unless slavery was prohibited in them, but a compromise was needed to save the nation. Senator Jesse B. Thomas proposed a compromise: slavery would be forbidden in regions of the Louisiana Purchase above 36°30", but Missouri would be permitted entry as a slave State.⁵²

⁵⁰ Hickey, *War of 1812*, 14-16, 233 and Jones, *Crucible of Power*, 71.

⁵¹ Noble E. Cunningham, jr., *The Presidency of James Monroe* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 21, 118, 125 and 187-188.

⁵² Cunningham, *James Monroe*, 87-98.

Congress passed the compromise legislation and Missouri and Maine – which prohibited slavery – entered the Union. The issue was, like all slavery issues, difficult for the government. Monroe convened Cabinet to discuss the issue, but only after Congress passed the legislation. He wanted to know if Congress had the right to legislate slavery; the Cabinet agreed it did. The President also wanted to know if the compromise was only in force as long as a region was a territory. Monroe was unable to obtain a consensus so he rephrased the question and asked if the provision was constitutional; Cabinet agreed it was.⁵³ During and after the Missouri Compromise debate, it is no wonder that Monroe's administration was reluctant to tackle anything related to slavery.

Contemporaneous to the Missouri controversy, the American Colonisation Society hoped that the navy would support its plans for African colonisation. With both the colony and the navy on the West African coast, freed Africans could be repatriated and the slave trade curtailed. Monroe met with his Cabinet in December 1819 and discussed American efforts against the slave trade. Among the Cabinet members was William H. Crawford, Treasury Secretary, who was also the Society's Vice-President. Crawford argued that the government's appropriation for slave trade suppression from the 19 March 1819 Act should be handed to the Society for management, but other members of Cabinet objected. Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson was wary about the endeavour. So was Adams, who not only feared spiralling costs but also the ramifications to America if it led to the establishment of formal African colonies. Moreover, he felt the government had no permission to spend the appropriation to sustain freed Africans along the coast. Harmon concluded that Monroe "disregarded the opinions of Adams" and provided funding to transport freed Africans back to Africa.

⁵³ Cunningham, *James Monroe*, 102-104.

Monroe also placed the endeavour under the auspices of the Navy Department to spend the \$100,000 budget.⁵⁴

The President had no qualms and the ACS continued to press Monroe. They asked that he appoint a US agent to handle the freed Africans and provide limited support to the Society's efforts, like dispatching a warship, rather than establish a formal government colony.⁵⁵ Monroe had to face steady opposition, in particular from Adams, who remained wary of overseas colonies and suspicious of the ACS's motives. Adams confided to his diary that he felt that some slaveholders probably hoped to use the colonial system to rid themselves of freed blacks at the government's expense. The President, echoing the sentiments of the ACS, believed that freed slaves were troublesome and that repatriation would rid the country of an element "who lived by pilfering, and corrupted the slaves[.]"⁵⁶

Adams told his diary that the Society had "got the ear of the President, and Crawford" and had "already got their fingers into the purse[.]" The government was therefore going to pay for half the cost of the charter vessel readying for the coast, that would bring the colonists to the planned settlement at Sherbro Island. The President authorised the money for the voyage and decided to send Congress a letter detailing the expenses, but only after the fact.⁵⁷ Du Bois concluded that these US anti-slave trade actions "may be regarded as the last of the Missouri Compromise measures."⁵⁸ Adams distanced himself from the entire colonisation effort and gladly handed it over to the Secretary of the Navy. Adams wrote that "[t]here is so much management in this affair,

⁵⁴ Judd Scott Harmon, "Suppress and Protect: The United States Navy, The African Slave Trade, and Maritime Commerce, 1794-1862" (PhD diss., College of William and Mary, 1977), 265-266.

⁵⁵ Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 51-56.

⁵⁶ John Quincy Adams, 12 March 1819, *Memoirs*, vol. 4, 292-293 and John Quincy Adams, 25 November 1822, *Memoirs*, vol. 6, 103-104.

⁵⁷ John Quincy Adams, 9 and 10 December 1819, *Memoirs*, vol. 4, 473-477.

⁵⁸ Du Bois, *Suppression of the Slave-Trade*, 98 and 121-122. Du Bois also undertakes an intricate discussion of US lawmaking, for example see p. 107.

that I have no doubt much money will be expended to no useful purpose.”⁵⁹ The compromise atmosphere allowed support for the American Colonisation Society and the goal to rid the United States of “troublesome” freed slaves.

The compromise is significant because it also allowed the United States to placate British concerns, and claim that the United States had modified its use of sea power and had a naval presence along West Africa. On 23 December 1820, Monroe’s Cabinet met to discuss the British proposals for suppression of the slave trade that were submitted on 20 December. Secretary Thompson believed that “by declining it [the right of search] we shall expose ourselves to the imputation of insincerity as to our purpose of suppressing the trade[.]” The British Government would then use it with the Europeans, against the Americans, in Britain’s global strategic moves. But Secretary of War John C. Calhoun disagreed and believed that Britain used slave trade suppression to buttress British power.⁶⁰

Calhoun was from South Carolina, a slaveholder, a conservative, and he was under pressure to protect Southern interests. In the 1810 congressional elections, he was elected as one of the “War Hawks” advocating a strong stand against Britain in the prelude to the War of 1812.⁶¹ During the Missouri compromise debate, he refrained from making public statements, but was “strongly with the compromisers[.]” Irving H. Bartlett concluded that Calhoun feared Southern reaction if they believed “that property in slaves was” threatened.⁶² On 24 April 1820, for example, Thomas B. Robertson, formerly Representative from Louisiana, wrote Calhoun about the strategic issues the region faced. He feared the Northern abolitionists who were diverting the nation’s priorities. Robertson despised Washington spending “hundreds and Thousands of

⁵⁹ John Quincy Adams, 6 January 1820, *Memoirs*, vol. 4, 496.

⁶⁰ John Quincy Adams, 23 December 1820, *Memoirs*, vol. 5, 216-217.

⁶¹ Jones, *Crucible of Power*, 74.

⁶² Irving H. Bartlett, *John C. Calhoun: A Biography* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), 19-42 and 109.

dollars” to employ US warships “in protecting the Slaves of Africa and escorting them back” while “our Coast and the adjoining seas are exposed to the most daring depredations that the world has witnessed[.]” The people of New Orleans suffered at the hands of the pirates who descended on the coast and stole property, including slaves.⁶³

With this backdrop, Calhoun told Cabinet that Britain had banned the slave trade of its citizens and now wanted other nations to follow suit because British trade was under pressure from cheaper slave-produced goods. In this new era, Calhoun professed, Britain “could not bear to see a profitable trade enjoyed by rivals[;]” slave trade suppression was the only way to increase British economic growth. America should refuse to agree to British proposals on nationalistic grounds, for if the United States agreed, it would simply be a British satellite. Thompson was finally outnumbered when Adams came down on Calhoun’s side. Nevertheless, Adams reminded Cabinet that London was under pressure from abolitionists and had to be seen to “conciliate them.” Consequently, Monroe listened to all sides and agreed that the government should hold firm against the British. If anything, the President believed that the American position would strengthen its stand against searching ships in wartime to impress sailors.⁶⁴

But to allay British concerns, Cabinet discussed several options, among them a permanent and separate US naval force for the African coast. This was ruled “inconvenient” and Cabinet wanted to keep its options open to meet other national needs, like those demanded by Robertson. Thompson, while disagreeing with Calhoun, admitted that a formal treaty would “deprive us of the power of adapting the disposal of all our naval force to the exigencies of circumstances from time to time.” Instead, Cabinet agreed to remind London that the US had “a vessel constantly cruising on that coast, and that it was intended to keep such force there[.]” The Executive felt, in

⁶³ W. Edwin Hemphill, (ed.), *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, 24 vols., vol. 5, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 74-75, Thomas B[olling] Robertson to John C. Calhoun, 24 April 1820.

⁶⁴ John Quincy Adams, 23 December 1820, *Memoirs*, vol. 5, 217-218.

combination with its other African policy, it could modify its use of sea power as a compromise. Cabinet agreed that they could order US naval commanders on the African coast to co-operate with the British. They could cruise together, if “useful or convenient,” and exchange intelligence “for the furtherance of the common object.”⁶⁵

Anglo-American discussions languished for several years, and an attempt in 1823 on a compromise treaty that would have declared slavery equal to piracy failed. Naval ships would have been allowed to capture pirate-slavers of each nation, but they would have to be sent to their home country for trial.⁶⁶ The British agreed to the terms of the treaty, and Cabinet agreed to submit it to the Senate for ratification, over the objections of Adams. But one of the biggest failures of Monroe’s administration was its final rejection by Congress who amended the treaty to limit the right of search to the African coast, which London rejected at that time. Adams still had to deal with the British and their repeated requests for joint Anglo-American co-operation against the slave trade, but British leaders realised the domestic constraints Washington faced.⁶⁷

During the early 1830s, Sir Charles Vaughan, British ambassador in Washington, told Lord Palmerston that Washington was wary of upsetting the South at a time when “Anti-Slavery Societies have roused the jealousy of all the Slaveholders[.]”⁶⁸ The British sought to bring the Americans into a treaty with the French, but again Washington rejected the proposal. Palmerston respected the American objections to the right of search being extended to their coastline. He concluded that it was “sufficient reason for not further pressing the adoption of such an article.”⁶⁹ It would go

⁶⁵ John Quincy Adams, 23 and 30 December 1820, *Memoirs*, vol. 5, 218-219 and 222-223.

⁶⁶ Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 26-37.

⁶⁷ Cunningham, *James Monroe*, 170 and John Quincy Adams, 7 May 1824, 19 and 20 June 1823, *Memoirs*, vol. 6, 148-151 and 321-322.

⁶⁸ IUP, vol. 14, Correspondence with Foreign Powers (hereafter, Class B), 84, no. 120, Charles R. Vaughan to Viscount Palmerston, 12 December 1833.

⁶⁹ IUP, vol. 14, (Class B), 85-92, enclosures no. 121, no. 122, and no. 123, Charles R. Vaughan to Louis McLane, 25 December 1833, Louis McLane to Sir C.R. Vaughan, 24 March 1834, and Palmerston to Charles Vaughan, 7 July 1834.

against liberal ideals to push too hard. Instead, Britain and the United States respected each other's opinion on the application of sea power and sought to mitigate tension by developing alternative uses of their navies that were acceptable to their wider interests.

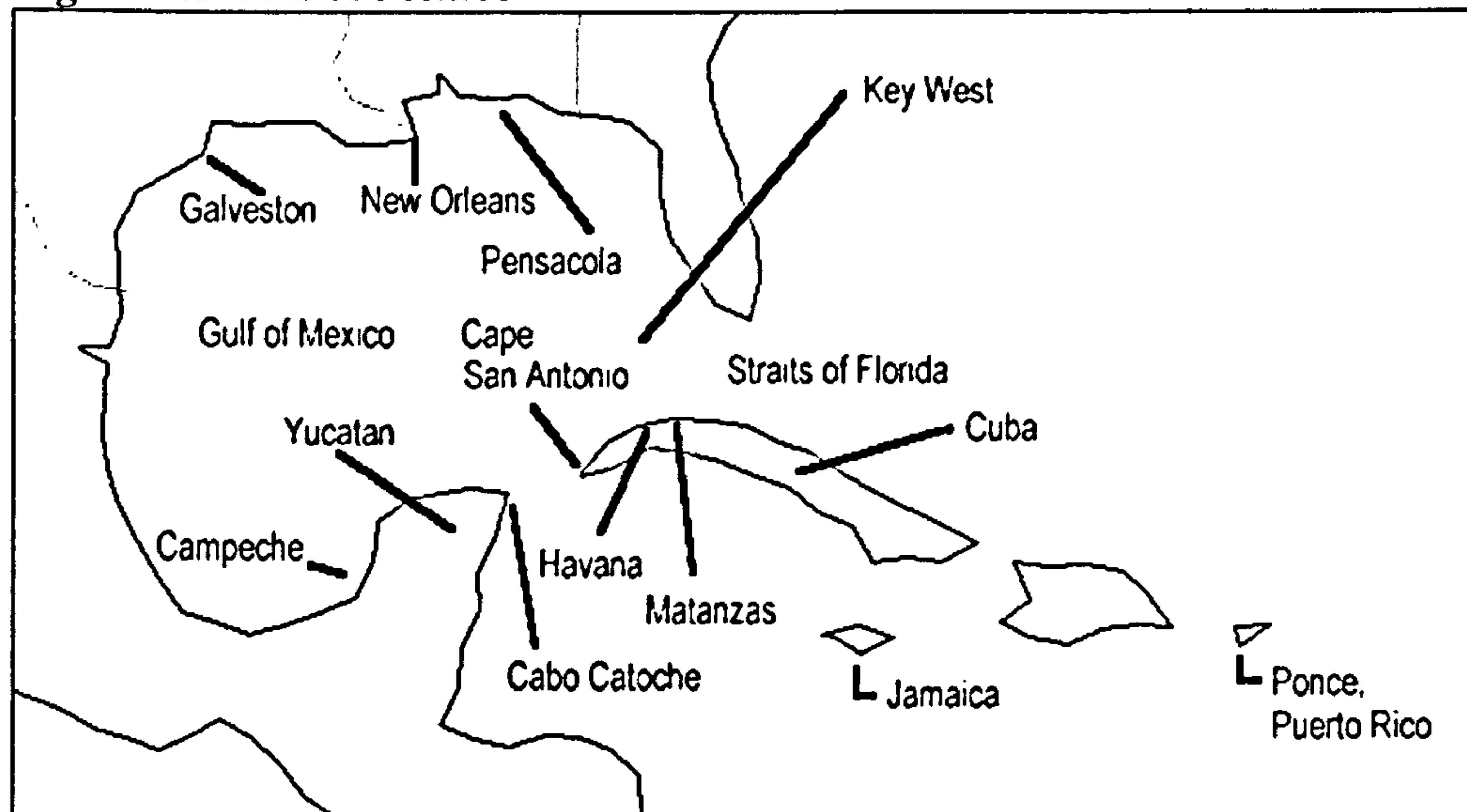
Conclusion

During the 1820s, Britain and the United States used diplomatic manoeuvres to secure their long-term objectives in the equatorial Atlantic. Britain, fearful of sparking European intervention in Latin America, carefully avoided provoking other nations while Canning balanced his strategy and sought diplomatic co-operation with the United States. While Britain was freer to act against slavers, domestic American unease over slave trade issues, and British motives, curbed efforts to formulate a common policy over slave trade suppression. Divergent economic and political interests meant that the nations went their separate ways in the development of equatorial Atlantic policy. Both deployed navies to fight piracy, but only the Royal Navy also fought the slave trade. Meanwhile, the US Navy deployed to West Africa to provide minimal support for private colonisation efforts in conjunction with anti-piracy duties. When the immediate need to protect commerce ended, patrols were reduced, and West African deployment languished. But while there, the United States offered to co-operate with the British over slave trade suppression, if convenient. There were signs that the peacetime use sea power to further long-term objectives might be used as common ground to calm disputes in the Anglo-American relationship.

Chapter Four: Operations against Pirates and Slavers, 1820s and 1830s

Britain and the United States believed in using sea power to meet immediate threats to commerce. But the political and economic considerations of the nations shaped their naval response to pirates and privateers during the 1820s. The US Navy protected American shipping, instituted convoys, and hunted pirates in their lairs. The squadron protected the Gulf of Mexico and provided West African colonial support, but the former was the priority. West African expansion was left to the endeavours of the Colonisation Society. The reality of the US Navy deployment was sporadic, rather than the “constant cruising” Washington hoped would placate the British. The Royal Navy, in response, policed the seas for pirates and privateers and monitored American naval activity. London dispatched naval reinforcements to the Gulf of Mexico, but they spent little time in the region. British naval deployment was more complicated and suffered from political constraints in London.

Figure 4.1 Gulf of Mexico



Source: Base map from *AGIS 1.6*.

Note: Locations approximate.

Britain was suspicious of the American presence; nevertheless, the Royal Navy refrained from provoking the US Navy, or other nations, in the Gulf of Mexico. London and Washington were wary of each other, but kept the peace. In the Gulf, the only plan

for mutual co-operation was when circumstances arose and at the discretion of local commanders. While the White House hoped that the British would co-operate with the naval force the US was able to dispatch to West Africa, when piracy declined in the Gulf the Americans reduced their naval commitment. Consequently, there were even fewer US Navy cruises to the West African coast. When American vessels left the coast, Britons wondered when the Americans might return.

In contrast, the Royal Navy in that region was free to act as it chose against privateers, pirates, and slavers. They suppressed the slave trade for humanitarian reasons, but Royal Navy officers also told London of the economic potential of the region, in particular places like Fernando Po, that could rival the West Indies. Still, divergent American and British policies, and accompanying domestic and global restraints, affected Anglo-American naval deployment and Britain's goal of greater American activity along the West African coast. Again, co-operation was limited to that undertaken as chance arose. But while their relations were tense, Britain and America co-existed in the equatorial Atlantic. Both nations sought to control their use of sea power, rather than spark conflict, while furthering their growing objectives.

American Naval Response

The American naval deployment in the equatorial Atlantic was in response to the piracy threat. When the Spanish-American colonies rebelled, they threw the region into chaos. After 1815, surplus maritime resources poured into Central and South American waters. Starkey concludes that this "flow of Baltimore schooners and American seafarers, together with the picaroons of former Spanish and French privateersmen, contributed significantly to the *course independante* and the wars of liberation."¹ Privateers from both sides fought each other and interfered with British and American shipping. Pirates also took advantage of weak Spanish power and launched raids from Cuba and the

¹ David J. Starkey, "Pirates and Markets," *Research in Maritime History*, 7 (December 1994): 76-77.

Yucatan Peninsula on the shipping of all nations.² While this market returned to equilibrium, piracy was deemed a threat to commerce and navies were “dispatched to eradicate, reduce or at least police it.”³ Before 1819, the Americans conducted few forceful naval operations to protect their trade against pirates or privateers. When a constitutional government was restored in Spain in March 1820, most Spanish forces withdrew from Spanish America, but General Morales, the Spanish commander, declared that the 1200 miles of Spanish-American coastline under dispute was under a blockade.⁴

The US Navy had to protect US shipping from pirates and from interference by privateers of Spain and her rebels. The extended US 1820 Anti-Piracy Act covered piracy against, and committed by, all ships and citizens, not just those of or against the United States.⁵ Operations against pirates were simple because they were the enemy of all nations. American operations were free from European complications, although by 1824 Washington was wary they would test the Monroe Doctrine. United States naval deployment in the early 1820s was primarily for trade protection. American forces supported American commercial interests, rather than altruistic activities like slave trade suppression.

The House of Representatives Committee on Naval Affairs reported on 2 March 1822, while discussing piracy, on the distribution of the American navy. At that time, the *Franklin*, *Constellation* and *Dolphin* were in the Pacific on a mission to protect American commerce and US whalers in particular. Meanwhile, the *Constitution*,

² Using J.L. Anderson’s terminology this piracy was episodic and tied with the disruption of trade and also intrinsic and part of the local economic system (Anderson, “Piracy and World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation,” *Journal of World History*, 6:2 (1995): 175-199). For more on the piracy in the region during this period see Mark C. Hunter, “Piraten im Golf von Mexiko im frühen 19.Jahrhundert” in Hartmut Roder, (ed.), *Piraten - Abenteuer oder Bedrohung?* (Edition Temmin, 2002) 52-65.

³ Starkey, “Pirates and Markets,” 65-66.

⁴ United States, *Register of Debates*, 18th Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, 31 January 1825, “Report of the Committee of Foreign Relations of the House of Representatives, on Piracy and Outrages on American Commerce by Spanish Privateers” and Statutes at Large, vol. 3, 510-514 and 600.

⁵ Statutes at Large, vol. 3, 510-514 and 600.

Ontario, and schooner *Nonsuch*, were in the Mediterranean, tasked with commerce protection and insurance against the Barbary Powers. The navy also had ships deployed in the Gulf to protect against the pirates: the *Hornet*, *Spark* and *Enterprise*, the schooners *Alligator*, *Shark*, *Grampus*, and *Porpoise*; and gunboat numbers 158 and 168 patrolled the Florida and Georgia coastline while the *Macedonian* would soon sail from Boston to the Caribbean.⁶

For most of 1822, the Americans patrolled against, and sent out warnings about, pirates and Spanish privateers, and the rebel forces seemed to respect the Americans. The Americans hunted for pirates, tried to dislodge them from their lairs, and instituted convoys for the protection of shipping. One important concept was to escort merchant ships past the areas which pirates frequented. The *Hornet*, for example, Robert Henley commanding, sailed in February 1822, from Havana to Pensacola, Florida, with a convoy of twenty-two ships, mostly American. But American support of the rebel American states hurt their fight against the pirates around Cuba. The *Charleston Courier* reported on 17 April 1822, that the Cubans, still loyal to Spain, were annoyed at President Monroe's desire for Spain to recognise the rebel Latin American states and suppress lucrative piracy.⁷

By May 1822, the US Navy settled into a pattern of dispatching a warship to convoy vessels from Havana to America every Sunday. Still, the actions of the privateers irritated the Americans, and by July the *Cyane* was prepared to sail, under the command of Captain Robert T. Spence, "with extensive powers to put a stop to the outrages committed on our flag by Spanish Privateers."⁸ Spence, and other American officers, wrote Spanish authorities and told them to leave American shipping alone. But

⁶ United States, *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 1173-1174, House, 2 March 1822.

⁷ *ACDA*, 21 February 1822, 2, column e; *Norfolk Beacon*, 22 February 1822, reprint in *ACDA*, 26 February 1822, 2, column f and 3, column a; and *ACDA*, 2 March 1822, 2, column d; *Charleston Courier*, reprint in *ACDA*, 24 April 1822, 3, column a; and *ACDA*, 24 April 1822, 3, column c.

⁸ *ACDA*, 15 June 1822, 2, column b and 12 July 1822, 2, column a.

the protests seemed in vain and Spanish privateering activities continued, with the US merchant brig *General Andrew Jackson* captured by the Spanish privateer *General Pereira* on 22 July 1822. The Spanish representative, Don Francisco Gonzalez de Linarez, told Spence that the Spanish authorities at Puerto Rico were unaware of illegal actions taken by Spanish privateers and Washington would have to seek redress from “the treasury of Spain[.]”⁹ Nevertheless, pirates continued to operate from Spanish territories, namely Cape San Antonio and Matanzas, Cuba (see figure 4.1, Gulf of Mexico).

Increased US Action

Under continued pirate attacks, and pressure from Congress, the White House tasked Commodore David Porter to command the expanded Gulf squadron on 21 December 1822 and it sailed in February 1823.¹⁰ The US Navy was most active in the Western Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico during 1823, especially against the pirates. Yet, under the auspicious of the anti-piracy patrol, Washington also dispatched ships to West Africa. Secretary of the Navy Samuel L. Southard later reported that since the passage of the Act “authorizing an additional Naval Force for the suppression of Piracy” more ships were sent to that station. From the squadron’s base on Thompson’s Island, Key West, the Secretary ordered Porter to suppress piracy, protect US merchant ships, convoy specie to the US from Mexico, and co-operate with any other nation’s navies in the pursuit of pirates. Secretary Thompson stated, vaguely, that Porter had some leeway to pursue pirates into uninhabited regions where Spanish authority was ineffective. But

⁹ United States, *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, 1227-1229, “Statement of Arthur Edgerton, mate of the brig General Andrew Jackson,” undated autumn 1822, and Robert Trail Spence to Smith Thompson [recounting details of meeting with de Linarez], 3 September 1822. Spence and de Linarez carried on lengthy correspondence over these issues, see copies in United States, *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, 1230-1244.

¹⁰ David F. Long, *Nothing Too Daring: A Biography of Commodore David Porter, 1780-1843* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1970), 203-205.

warned him to avoid chasing pirates onto Spanish territory or provoking a confrontation with any foreign power.¹¹

On station, Porter ordered the *Shark*, under Matthew Perry, and three small schooners to patrol along Southern Puerto Rico. Porter intended the entire squadron to sortie for San Juan to stop Spanish privateers preying on US shipping. His interaction with the Spanish was tense and led to the death of one American from the *Fox* when she entered San Juan harbour and was accidentally fired upon by nervous Spanish soldiers.¹² After telling Miguel de la Torre, the governor of Puerto Rico, that the US Navy was there to protect US shipping, Porter sailed from Puerto Rico and returned to hunting pirates. Hunting for pirates and destroying their lairs was the primary goal, while the squadron also convoyed shipping safely out of their range. Porter had difficulty differentiating pirates from privateers. Nevertheless, he told Washington that every Spaniard he encountered was well armed and could be a potential pirate, but if he stopped every Spanish ship “their coasting trade would soon be entirely broken up.”¹³

Since his arrival, five pirate ships that had watched his fleet were disbanded, but he dispatched two schooners leeward of Matanzas to investigate more reports. But Porter concluded that the squadron had two conflicting duties that divided his fleet – convoying, and search and destroy – and he decided to give more weight to protecting commerce until more warships arrived. By mid-April 1823, the squadron had established its base at Thompson’s Island, landed their supplies, equipped barges, and

¹¹ Britain, *British Foreign and State Papers* (hereafter, *BFSP*), vol. 11, 33, Samuel L. Southard, “Report of the Secretary of the Navy,” 1 December 1823; Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 207-208 and United States, *U.S. Serial Set*, vol. 89, 18th Cong., 1st sess., Senate Documents, enclosure in Document no. 1, 190, D. Porter to Secretary of the Navy, 19 November 1823. Hereafter, the *U.S. Serial Set* will be cited according to the recommended Library of Congress style, for example, *S.Doc., No. 1*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 190.

¹² Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 210 and *S.Doc., No. 1*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 186, D. Porter to S. Thompson, 3 March 1823.

¹³ *S.Doc., No. 1*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 136-139 and 147-148, David Porter to Governor of Puerto Rico, 4 March 1823, Miguel de la Torre to David Porter, 6 March 1823 and D. Porter to Smith Thompson, 28 March 1823.

deployed at various points around Cuba. Regardless, Porter was displeased that he was forced to use the small schooners for convoy duty rather than hunting pirates.¹⁴

By 24 April 1823, after almost two months on station, Porter declared victory against the pirates. Convoying continued and he had recently dispatched two barges to a bay near Point Yeacos to search for three pirate ships. Porter told Secretary Thompson that there were no pirates larger than an “open boat” operating along the Cuban coast anymore. He also acknowledged that it was not just the American squadron that forced the pirates to hide. The larger pirate ship *Saragarina* had finally been captured “in her flight, from here [Matanzas], having been taken by two British sloops of war at the east end of the Island.”¹⁵

The squadron’s presence had a “moral effect” on both sides: Spain recalled some of her privateers, the rebel states were more careful in issuing commissions, and the pirates were under control. It was only with the presence of a naval force and the co-operation of local authorities could they stop piracy. The Secretary of the Navy also believed that piracy was suppressed around Cuba, and he extended the squadron’s range to include West Africa. It would give aid to the African colonist societies, and on the return voyage watch for slavers. Porter replied that if his West Indian force was larger, then a ship could sortie to Africa every six weeks.¹⁶ Because of the increased patrol area, Porter divided the squadron into two divisions. He planned “by a constant routine, [in] giving equal protection to our colony on the coast of Africa and guarding against the slave trade[.]”¹⁷

¹⁴ *S.Doc., No. 1*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 147-148 and 150-153, D. Porter to Smith Thompson, 28 March 1823 and D. Porter to Secretary of the Navy, 16 April 1823.

¹⁵ *S.Doc., No. 1*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 150-156, D. Porter to Secretary of the Navy, 16 April 1823, C.K. Stribling to S. Cassin, 8 April 1823 and D. Porter to Smith Thompson, 24 April 1823.

¹⁶ *S.Doc., No. 1*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 189-192, D. Porter to Secretary of the Navy, 19 November 1823; Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 216-217; and Britain, *BFSP*, vol. 11, 33-35, Samuel L. Southard, “Report of the Secretary of the Navy,” 1 December 1823.

¹⁷ Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 219; and *S.Doc., No. 1*, 18th Cong., 2nd sess., 116-117 and 119-120, D. Porter to Samuel Southard, 20 January 1824, D. Porter to S.L. Southard, 8 April 1824.

The seed was sown for US naval expansion to West Africa, but it was conditioned by Washington's use of sea power in home waters against immediate threats to commerce, rather than any real desire to suppress the slave trade. Washington also realised that it had to be careful in exercising its use of sea power close to the interests of other nations. Significantly, Washington removed Porter from command, replacing him with Commodore Lewis Warrington, when the former threatened relations with Spain. Porter had received accusations from an American merchant, Stephen Cabot, that Spaniards had robbed him and fled to Fajardo, Puerto Rico. On 14 November 1824, in response to the arrest of an officer gathering intelligence on the island, Porter and 200 men went ashore and demanded redress. Porter's landing occurred in a region under direct Spanish control and Washington feared the action would test Monroe's doctrine. Porter, Washington opined, showed poor diplomatic skills and was found guilty of conduct unbecoming, insubordination, and disobeying orders.¹⁸

Decline of US Naval Operations

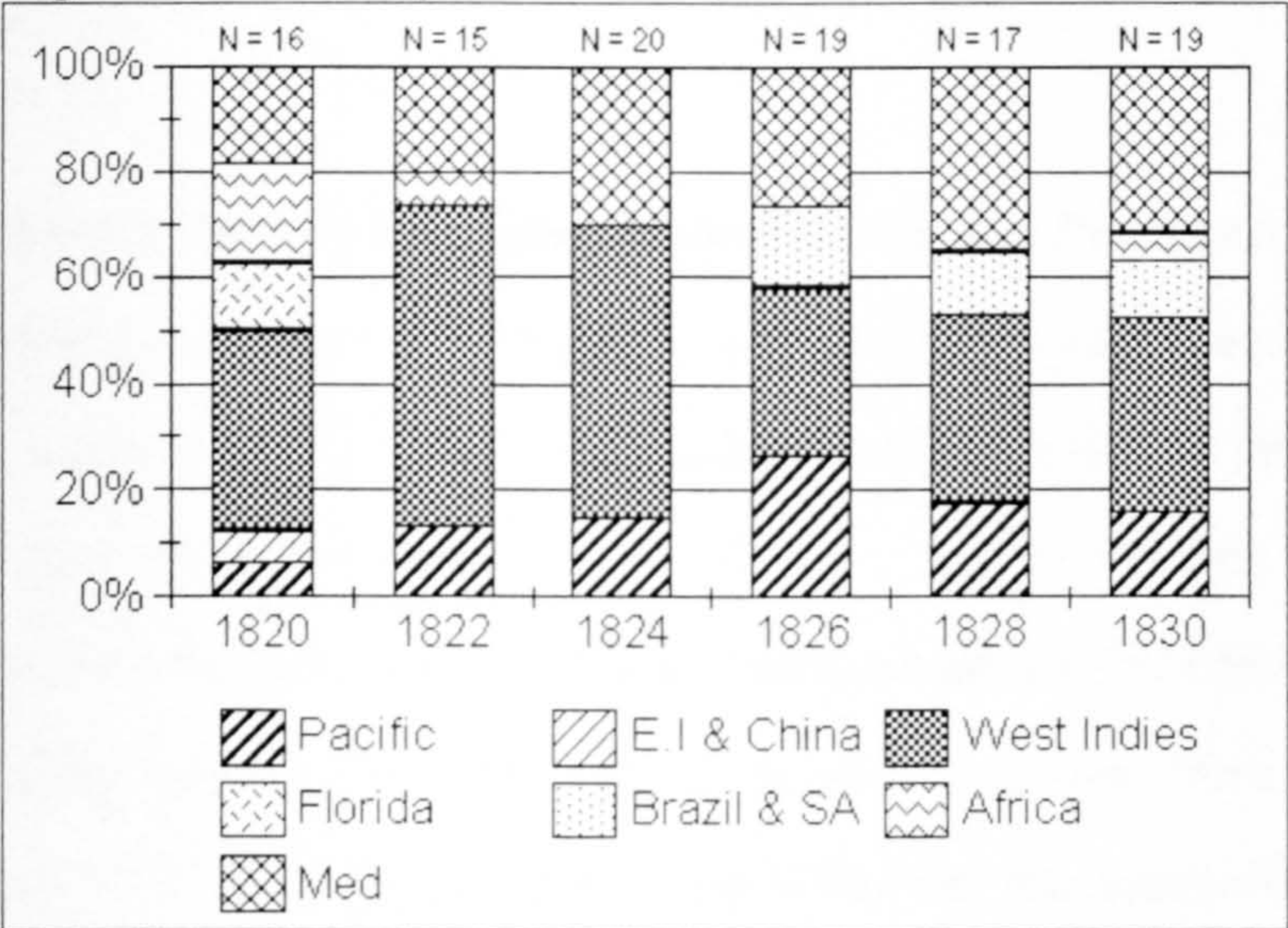
While Washington was wary that the Monroe Doctrine might be tested, the US also found that pirate activity in the Gulf had changed. As piracy declined so to did US naval efforts. By late 1824, Secretary Southard concluded that the piracies were no less traumatic for the victims, but the pirates hid in the creeks and bays, venturing forth only to attack lone ships. Warrington also attributed the decline in piracy to the US naval deployment along the Cuban coast.¹⁹ Convoying and hunting patrols had forced the pirates to change their tactics. They attacked in small, open boats, and only if no

¹⁸ Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 227-229.

¹⁹ Britain, *BFSP*, vol. 12, 571-572, Samuel L. Southard, "Secretary of the Navy to the President of the United States," 1 December 1824; and *S.Doc.*, No. 2, 19th Cong., 1st sess., 104-105, L. Warrington to Samuel L. Southard, 15 February 1825 and L. Warrington to Samuel L. Southard, 10 March 1825.

warships were around. Then they fled to a new place “far removed from the scene of their late exploit[.]”²⁰

Figure 4.2 US Navy Time Series, 1820-1830



Source: Calculated from United States, *Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1820-1830.

Note: EI = East Indies; SA = South America; Med = Mediterranean; N = number of warships.

Given the pirates, their tactics and strategy, Warrington concluded that it was virtually impossible to stop the remaining piracy everywhere. The only strategy to employ was to search every bay and creek where pirates were suspected of hiding, and examine every ship deemed suspicious.²¹ Regardless, by December 1825, Southard declared that the war against piracy was over. The West Indian squadron still had the barges, the sloop *Hornet*, brig *Spark*, the frigate *Constellation* and the corvette *John Adams*, but the schooner *Fox* was the only ship purchased under the anti-piracy naval appropriations that remained in service.²² Although the piracy and privateering threat

²⁰ *S.Doc., No. 2, 19th Cong., 1st sess., 117-119 and 122-123, L. Warrington to Samuel L. Southard, 27 April 1825.*

²¹ *S.Doc., No. 2, 19th Cong., 1st sess., 117-119 and 122-123, L. Warrington to Samuel L. Southard, 27 April 1825.*

²² *S.Doc., No. 2, 19th Cong., 1st sess., 104, Samuel L. Southard, “Report from the Navy Department,” and Appendix A, 2 December 1825.*

declined, the American naval presence was still strong close to home waters. Consequently, the African naval commitment was sporadic, with deployments in 1820, 1822, and 1830, for example, as the need arose for commerce protection (see figure 4.2).

British Naval Deployment against Pirates and Privateers

The Royal Navy's North American and West Indies squadron accomplished piracy suppression, but station commanders worried about how far their forces were stretched. Throughout this period, the Royal Navy had the strength to cast a wide net to catch those who hurt British interests. For example, on 19 September 1820, the British ship *Eliza* was attacked by a privateer, the *Venganza*, from Margarita, at 22°56"N by 58°45"W. The suspect, whose fate is unclear, was bound for the Mediterranean and the Admiralty issued orders to several stations – the Mediterranean, Gibraltar, Tenerife, North American, Jamaican, Leeward Islands, South American, and Coast of Africa – to apprehend the ship.²³ But British geopolitical concerns reduced the strength of this net in the Western equatorial Atlantic. While the Americans expressed some concern over their relations with other nations, the British had European allies they had to deal with until Canning settled on his policy. London, while monitoring the activities of other nations, like the United States, mitigated its use of sea power, rather than threaten relations with other nations over “minor” issues, and draw them into the region.

The British sent out naval reinforcements, but only in response to complaints from British merchants that the Americans were doing the honourable work of the Royal Navy. The British, too, were suspicious of the US naval deployment and feared that it threatened its strategic interests in the Gulf. Nevertheless, when piracy was suppressed, and the troubles in Latin America subsided, congressional support for naval

²³ PRO, Adm 2/1585, Croker to Sir Graham Moore and others, 12 January 1821, Croker to Senior Officer of HM Ships at Gibraltar, 12 January 1821 and Croker to Captain Bartholomew, 12 January 1821.

expansion waned. The Americans were then left knowing that the security and stability of the region depended on the long-term presence of the Royal Navy.

Contrary to some newspaper reports, the Royal Navy acted against the pirates and privateers in the West Indies. West Indian officers reported that while they stopped some vessels suspected of piracy, they had insufficient proof to condemn them and overall the officers reported no attacks on British shipping. The Admiralty believed that pirates had settled at Cape San Antonio and watched for warships. But on station, officers believed that even pirates knew basic naval tactics. When a warship stationed off Cape San Antonio was blown off shore, the pirates emerged and attacked. Regardless, the Admiralty believed this was still the best strategy. Following the pirates into the dense jungle of Western Cuba was not an option; what was needed was for the Spanish government to send an adequate naval force to the region to suppress piracy.²⁴

J.W. Croker, at the Admiralty, wrote to Admiral Sir Charles Rowley about piracy around Cuba, and the government's futile efforts to convince the Spanish to tackle the problem. The Admiralty had received "representations" from the insurance underwriters and merchants of Britain about pirate attacks emanating from Cape San Antonio, Cuba, costing money and hurting British trade. But because of the geopolitical ramifications, the Spanish government had to be asked to act or to let the British onto their territory. Consequently, Croker told Rowley that "in the mean while you [are to] send one of your cruizers off Cape [San] Antonio to protect the British commerce, and, if it be possible *without violating the Spanish Territory* [emphasis added]" stop the pirates. Rowley took few stronger actions, although for example, the warship *Tyne* sailed into St. Jago de Cuba on 14 June, liberated the *Swift*, and obtained compensation for her illegal seizure by a Spanish privateer.²⁵

²⁴ *The Times* (London), 24 July 1822, 2.

²⁵ PRO, Adm 2/1585, J.W. Croker to Sir Charles Rowley, 23 March 1822; and PRO, Adm 50/136, Rear Admiral Sir C. Rowley, Journal, entries for 22 March, 10 April, 1 May, 30 May, and 24 June 1822.

Meanwhile, Rowley ordered his ships to act against pirates. By 16 May, he ordered one of the warships stationed off Cape San Antonio, the pirate lair, to help protect British commerce until he received word that the local Spanish authorities intended to act. When Rowley obtained intelligence from customs officials that pirates infested the waters around Sambero and Dog Island, the Admiral ordered a ship “to examine those places frequently.” By July 1822, Rowley seemed to have settled into a patrol pattern that tried to balance trade protection with hunting for pirates. For example, on 5 July 1822, he ordered the *Sybille* to sea and sailed to convoy trade for Savanilla, Santa Martha, and Carthagen. The *Tamar* would soon sail to escort trade to the Gulf of Mexico and “look into the inlets in the neighbourhood of Cape [San] Antonio, and endeavour to get hold of the pirates[.]” But Sir Charles, the youngest son of Sir Joshua Rowley, was from a naval family and wary that the squadron was “fully occupied.” He feared any more requests from merchants for help.²⁶

Part of Canning’s stronger action in late 1822 was the dispatch of naval reinforcements in response to calls at home from greater trade protection. But he also hoped to allay the fears of other nations over this exercise of sea power. The French, for example, were concerned, so Canning asked the British ambassador to France, Sir Charles Stuart, to allay French fears. Cuba was the focus of anti-pirate operations, but the British naval commander was ordered to consult first with the local Spanish authorities before acting. Canning wrote that if the Spanish accepted the British offer, the navy was to give its “active assistance for dislodging and punishing the offenders.” But if the local authorities refused, the Royal Navy was only “reluctantly” to seek out the pirates in their lairs and ashore.²⁷ Britain had to balance the needs of the

²⁶ PRO, Adm 50/136, Rear Admiral Sir C. Rowley, Journal, entries for 16 May, 25 June, 5 July, and 27 July 1822; and *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Rowley, Sir Charles” and “Rowley, Sir Joshua.”

²⁷ PRO, FO 27/265, reprinted in SDFOA, vol. 2, 109-110, George Canning to Sir Charles Stuart (No. 14), 1 December 1822.

gentlemanly capitalists and the use of sea power if it threatened Canning's wider diplomatic goals and relations with other nations.

Thus, the *Seringapatam*, under Captain Samuel Warren, the *Redwing*, Captain George Trefusis, and the *Grecian*, Lieutenant Cawley, were sent to the Cuban coast to hunt for pirates. The small task force arrived at Cape San Antonio on 21 November 1822 and found the *Hyperion* sailing for Jamaica with thirty captive pirates. On 22 December, another British warship, the *Scout*, sailed into Havana with nineteen prisoners, eight French and eleven Englishmen, captured in Honduras Bay. But the small task force gave up quickly and on Christmas Eve 1822 sailed for England.²⁸ The Admiralty believed that Rowley's force was sufficient to provide convoys, but they would provide more ships if needed. On 29 November, J.W. Buckle, Chairman of the Ship Owners' Committee, wrote to the Admiralty Office requesting convoys for the West Indies; the Admiralty replied that convoys had been established.²⁹

The half-hearted efforts of the British to fight piracy in the West Indies during 1822 were noted by the American press. The *City Gazette* of Charleston declared on 6 January that it was glad that British warships in the West Indies were "at last following the laudable example" set by the American navy. The American press was surprised at the complacency of the British government over piracy. The *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* exclaimed that "[i]t is a matter of surprize, that the British Government does not keep a force, as the U. States do, in the neighbourhood of Cuba, for the protection of their commerce." Meanwhile, American Ambassador Richard Rush was amazed that "in this year of 1822, we should have witnessed the [surprising] fact . . . of the commerce of England having been protected" by the US Navy.³⁰ But in London,

²⁸ Hampshire *Telegraph*, reprint in *The Times* (London), 3 February 1823, 3, column b.

²⁹ PRO, Adm 2/1586, J.W. Croker to Sir Charles Rowley, 11 November 1822; and J.W. Croker to J.W. Buckle, 30 November 1822, printed in *The Times* (London), 2 December 1822, 2, column e.

³⁰ Reprint in *ACDA*, 14 January 1822, 2, column e; *ACDA*, 15 June 1822, 2, column e; and NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 269, Richard Rush to John Quincy Adams, 28 September 1822.

The Times’ editorialised that while the Americans deployed under Porter, London took “things with their usual apathy and indifference, and take no notice of these depredations.”³¹

Considering London’s wider geopolitical policy, the Admiralty warned its commanders they had to be careful not to become inadvertently involved in the ongoing regional wars. Admiral Rowley’s orders reflected the Admiralty’s restraint. On 30 January 1823, he ordered Captain James Lilliecrap to sail for St. Jago de Cuba and seek restitution for Spanish privateer attacks. Nevertheless, if Havana refused to address the problem, Lilliecrap was to “immediately leave port” and inform the Cuban Captain-General that he would detain any Spanish privateer entering or leaving port. Rather than take greater action against Spain, Rowley ordered Lilliecrap to look for pirates at the Bay of Honda, Colerados reef, and Cape San Antonio. While convoys were established to escort vessels past Florida, London also wanted strict neutrality maintained. The Admiralty warned Captain Thomas J. Cochrane that British warships were forbidden to “convoy any Merchant Vessels avowedly loaded with Articles Contraband of War” for the belligerents.³² In early 1824, Vice Admiral Halsted forwarded to the Admiralty a request from the Secretary of State of Colombia requesting Royal Navy protection for specie transportation from Jamaica to Colombia. But even here, the Admiralty declared that the navy must maintain strict neutrality in the ongoing regional disputes. Consistent with British goals, the navy was only permitted to convey specie if “the goods were bound for England or belonged to British merchants.”³³

Royal Navy operations continued against the pirates in 1824, but analysis of head money awarded for captured pirates also shows that after 1824, piracy declined.

³¹ *The Times* (London), 6 May 1823, 4, column a.

³² PRO, Adm 1/273, C.R. [Charles Rowley] to Captain Lilliecrap, 30 January 1823; PRO, Adm 2/1586, J.W. Croker to Sir Charles Rowley, 24 April 1823, letter 2; and PRO, Adm 2/1586, John Barrow to Captain Thomas J. Cochrane, 19 July 1823.

³³ PRO, Adm 2/1587, John Barrow to Vice Admiral Halsted, Jamaica, 5 June 1824 and Barrow to Halsted, 4 June 1825.

Table 4.1 Royal Navy Pirate Captures for which Head Money Awarded, 1821-1847

Year	Gulf of Mexico/ West Indies	African Coast	Med -iterranean	Grecian Archipelago	East Indies	Other	Total
1821			1				1
1822	3			1			4
1823	7	1					8
1824	4						4
1825				4			4
1826	1		1	6			8
1827			2	4			6
1828	1						1
1829							
1830							
1831							
1832							
1833					1		1
1834						1	1
1835							
1836					5		5
1837							
1838					1		1
1839							
1840					1		1
1841							
1842							
1843					2		2
1844					2	1	3
1845		1					1
1846					1		1
1847					1		1
Total	16	2	4	15	14	2	53

Source: Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, vol. LV, paper 114, 49, J.T. Briggs, Accountant-General of the Navy, Admiralty, 6 March 1850.

Note: For missing years there were no reports of captures of pirates for which head money was awarded. The “Other” category indicates an unclear geographic location.

There were few captures for which Royal Navy crews were awarded head money and Royal Navy anti-piracy operations had moved on to other regions (see table 4.1). For example, the Admiralty issued a briefing on 22 September 1827 to the West Indies senior commander, Vice Admiral C.E. Fleming and to Commodore Francis Augustus Collier, son of Vice Admiral Sir George Collier³⁴, on the Africa station, reporting that a British ship was attacked by pirates while sailing from Africa to England. Again, on 22 March 1828, the Admiralty issued similar orders to African and West Indies commanders when the *New Prospect*, a London merchant ship, was attacked by a pirate at 22°23'N by 36°41'W. London wished the navy to use all necessary means to stop the pirates, despite the locations of the attacks.³⁵ Action to protect British gentlemanly interests was one thing; action against privateers and local authorities was another.

Anglo-American Naval Relations and Piracy Suppression

Faced with a common threat, Britain and the United States used sea power to provide immediate commerce protection. But suspicious of each other, and constrained by their own objectives and diplomacy, their joint use of sea power occurred only as circumstances arose. While the US Navy was effective in limited, regional efforts when their interests were threatened, the Royal Navy, deployed all along the North American and West Indies station, was the only force capable of policing the wider seas. As US anti-piracy efforts ended in the late 1820s, and American naval policy makers again retreated, the American government realised that even the region close to shore depended on the Royal Navy for protection. As instances of piracy periodically flared again, the Americans and British co-operated, but with the pirates moving farther and

³⁴ *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Collier, Francis Augustus."

³⁵ PRO, Adm 2/1588, J. Barrow to Vice Admiral C.E. Fleeming [also Flemming and Fleming in the records] and copy to Commodore [Francis Augustus] Collier, Africa station, 22 September 1827 and PRO, Adm 2/1589, Barrow to Commodore [Francis Augustus] Collier, C.B., Coast of Africa with similar letter to Vice Admiral C.E. Flemming, Jamaica, and the Senior Officers of HM Ships at Barbadoes [sic], 10 May 1828.

farther afield, it was the Royal Navy that had the wide net needed to capture them and protect economic interests in the equatorial Atlantic

But when the piracy crisis erupted and the Royal Navy and US Navy found themselves operating in the same waters, the former power was suspicious that American motives could upset the regional balance of power. In early 1823, for example, William Gray, British consul in Virginia, told Admiral Rowley that the American deployment to Key West was really planned as “a more permanent footing in Cuba.” British Ambassador Stratford Canning believed that the Americans would even use “intrigue” to prevent the island falling into the hands of another power, but tried to allay Rowley’s fears. Nevertheless, under the circumstances, Rowley concluded that it was prudent to dispatch HMS *Athol* to gather intelligence about American activities.³⁶

An American officer, probably Lieutenant Lawrence Kearney, told Captain Bouchier, of the *Athol*, that he was patrolling for pirates and the Key West base had only minimal provisions and a guard of about 100 marines. Bouchier decided that it would raise suspicions, or offence, if he sailed to Key West to gather more information, but he concluded that the Cubans wished to remain under Spanish sovereignty.³⁷ Even after the British laid aside their suspicions of the Americans, co-operation between the powers was limited. The British co-operated with the Americans against pirates, but joint suppression of privateer actions never entered discussions. Yet, Anglo-American naval relations in the Gulf were amicable.

Porter made special mention of the Jamaica station of the Royal Navy when he filed his 1823 report. Porter thought the American squadron was large enough to carry out its duties and declined British offers of assistance; instead, he left Anglo-American co-operation to “circumstances.” Although he failed to provide any examples, one case

³⁶ PRO, Adm 1/273, William Gray to Rear Admiral Sir Charles Rowley, undated, enclosure in Charles Rowley to J.W. Croker, Admiralty Office, 17 March 1823, [Stratford] Canning to Sir Charles Rowley, 7 February 1823 and Sir Charles Rowley to Captain Bouchier, [undated], c. 27 March 1823.

³⁷ PRO, Adm 1/274, Captain Bouchier to Charles Rowley, 10 April 1823.

of Anglo-American naval co-operation occurred in 1823. Two American naval schooners joined HMS *Bustard*, commanded by Captain R. Maclean, deployed to hunt pirates. Later, when Maclean joined Porter in the *Sea Gull*, they cruised along the Keys, tested the accuracy of Admiralty charts, and Porter provided aid to some of Maclean's sick crew. The Admiralty was pleased "at the good understanding and cooperation which has taken place between the British & American Squadrons."³⁸

When Commodore Porter was replaced, his successor Warrington seemed more inclined to co-operate with the British. On 21 March, for example, an American formation, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Isaac McKeever, fell in with a British detachment from HMS *Dartmouth*, also pirate hunting. The team united and began their search for a pirate ship that had recently attacked shipping.³⁹ The British searched for the pirates, but had no intelligence as to their location. McKeever had information and proposed a united front. The British agreed with his suggestion that the schooners remain in Cadiz Bay, along with the *Sea Gull*, while McKeever took a barge and two small cutters to sail in company with a British barge and two of their cutters.⁴⁰

At Jutia Gorda Key, they discovered a suspicious vessel, which raised the Spanish flag. The pirates attempted to fire their guns, with little luck, while the formation's boats bore down. McKeever hailed the pirate ship and told her commander to go on shore and hold his fire. The pirate captain was captured, another escaped, but gunfire erupted. The British and Americans stormed the pirate ship, some pirates scurried below deck, while others fled into the bushes. The force failed to find the pirates, so they took the prize and sailed on to the pirate lair at Key la Cosinerra, set it

³⁸ PRO, Adm 1/275, Captain R. Maclean to Commodore Porter, 23 July 1823, R. Maclean to Admiral Owen, 20 September 1823 and 26 September 1823; *S.Doc. No. 1*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 191, D. Porter to Secretary of the Navy, 19 November 1823; and PRO, Adm 2/1586, J.W. Croker to Sir Edward Owen, 6 October 1823.

³⁹ *S.Doc. No. 2*, 19th Cong., 1st sess., 113, L. Warrington, 3 April 1825.

⁴⁰ *S. Doc. No. 2*, 19th Cong., 1st sess., 114, I. McKeever to L. Warrington, 1 April 1825.

ablaze, and sailed back to Jutia Gorda, where they burned pirate shore facilities.⁴¹ Warrington applauded the British “for their efficient co-operation.” The Admiralty was also pleased with the outcomes of co-operation, but again warned their commanders to be careful to stay clear of becoming embroiled in the region disputes.⁴²

The British use of sea power was moderated by the geopolitical strategy of London. The Royal Navy could hunt for pirates out to sea, but had to be careful about going ashore, or forcing local Spanish authorities to take stronger action, while Britain decided how to recognise the rebel states and further commercial objectives. British policy also helped shape her responses to the United States. The Americans wanted a common Anglo-American policy towards Latin America, but insisted on British recognition of the rebel’s first. Britain then wanted a common policy taken toward Cuba and piracy, but by this time piracy was checked, and the Americans saw a formal agreement as unnecessary. Their only true commonality was trade protection and conflict avoidance.

During the conflict in the Gulf of Mexico effective Anglo-American co-operation against pirates and privateers was affected by the personal opinions of US commanders and British European and regional strategy. The early war against the slave traders was connected and reveals a similar pattern. Domestic American policy impaired Anglo-American co-operation, while the Royal Navy was free to act against slavers with few constraints against non-American flagged vessels. American efforts along the West African coast were in support of their colonisation schemes and American naval deployment was limited to occasional vessels diverted from their anti-piracy duties. When those duties ended, and Washington reduced the anti-piracy force, American

⁴¹ *S. Doc., No. 2, 19th Cong., 1st sess., 114-117, I. McKeever to L. Warrington, 1 April 1825.*

⁴² *S. Doc., No. 2, 19th Cong., 1st sess., 113 and 116-117, I. McKeever to L. Warrington, 1 April 1825 and L. Warrington, 3 April 1825; PRO, Adm 2/1587, John Barrow to Vice Admiral Halsted, 15 April 1825 and J. Barrow to Vice Admiral Halsted, 4 June 1824.*

naval efforts off West Africa also declined. Americans along the coast then found themselves with the Royal Navy as their sole protector.

The ACS, Colonisation, and Limited US Support

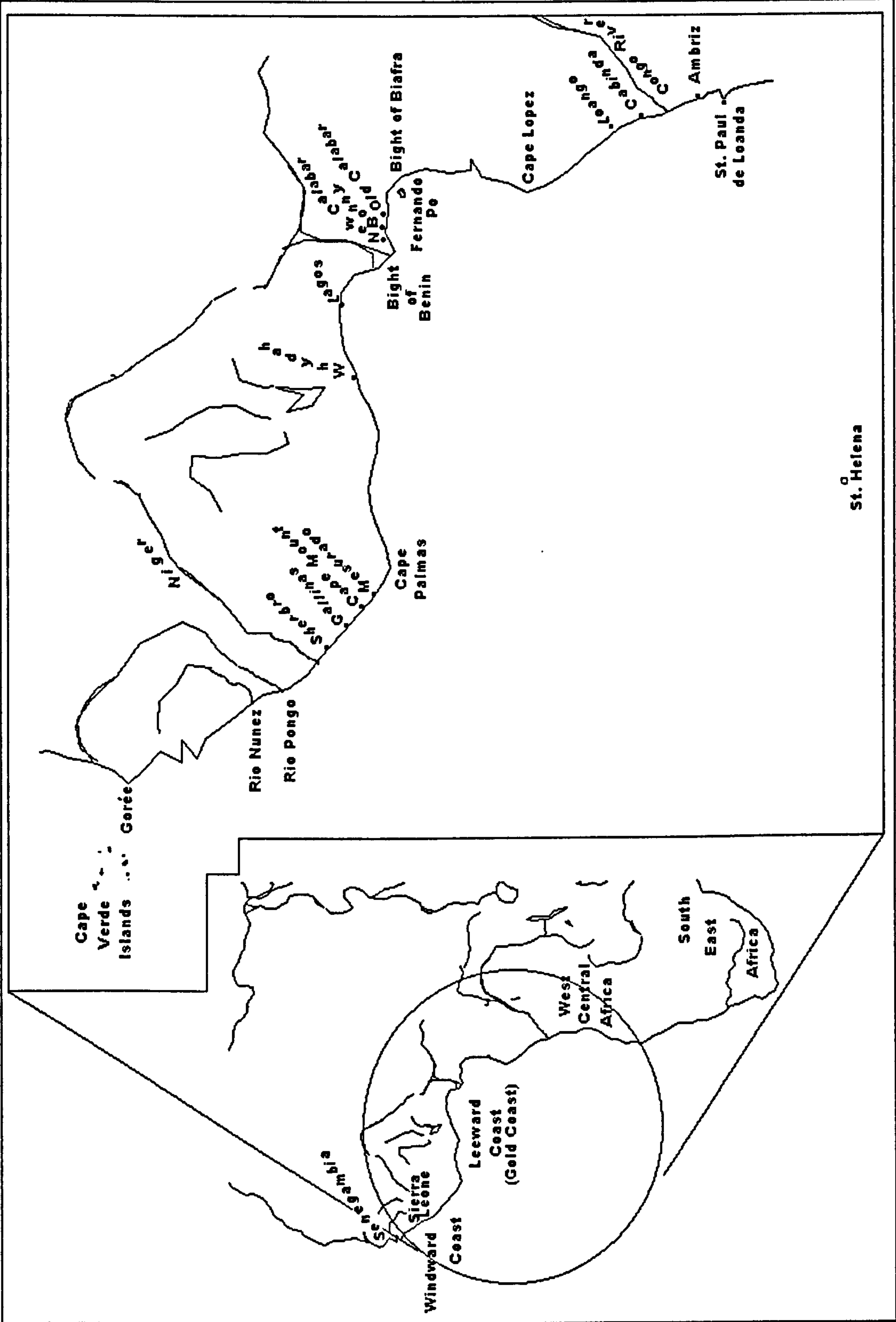
The White House hoped that its limited West African response would placate the British and the American Colonisation Society (ACS), but before the 1819 US anti-slave trade Act, the ACS had little experience on the West African coast. They started colonisation efforts in November 1817 and dispatched the Reverend Samuel J. Mills and Ebenezer Burgess to look for land suitable for a colony between Sherbro Island and Sierra Leone (see figure 4.3, West Africa). Colonisation efforts stagnated as the ACS gathered funding and government support. Moreover, US African agent Samuel Bacon warned Secretary Thompson as early as 1820 that the role of American colonisation efforts should be clear and explained to prevent misunderstandings with other powers.⁴³ For domestic and international reasons, Washington agreed and was wary of too forceful a presence along the coast.

The ACS's actions were most forceful under the tenure of their African agent Jehudi Ashmun. Ashmun told the Secretary that the colony was in a state of war with the natives and 800 had attacked the colony on 11 November 1822, but were repulsed. One Captain Laing, of the British Light Infantry, negotiated a settlement, but an American warship was needed. Ashmun believed that relying on British aid put both the US government and the Colonisation Society in a position of obligation to the British.⁴⁴

⁴³ Frankie Hutton, "Economic Considerations in the American Colonization Society's Early Efforts to Emigrate Free Blacks to Liberia, 1816-36," *The Journal of Negro History*, 68:4 (Fall 1983): 376-277; Beyan, *American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State*, 51-53; NA, RG 45, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Records of the Secretary of the Navy, Correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy relating to African Colonization, 1819-1844, Letters Sent (hereafter, Letters sent relating to African Colonization), Smith Thompson to Samuel Bacon, 17 January 1820, and NA, RG 45, Correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy relating to African Colonization, 1819-1844, Letters Received (hereafter, Letters received relating to African Colonization), Samuel Bacon to Smith Thompson, 12 March 1820.

⁴⁴ NA, RG 45, Letters sent relating to African Colonization, Samuel Southard to Dr. John Peaco, 2 April 1827; *S.Doc., No. 1*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., paper f, 122-123 and paper g, 124, J. Ashmun to Secretary of the Navy, 26 November 1822 and J. Ashmun to Secretary of the Navy, 7 December 1822;

Figure 4.3 West Africa



Source: Base map from *AGIS 1.62*.
Note: Locations are approximations only.

By the spring of 1826, Ashmun started carrying out all-out war against the slavers using a readily available naval force: Colombian privateers who had expanded their operations to the West African coast. One American, Captain John Chase, commanded the Colombian armed schooner *Jacinta*. Ashmun took thirty troops, sailed in the *Jacinta* for Trade Town, and off shore joined another Colombian cruiser, the *El Vencedor*, and fired broadsides into the town, driving the natives into the woods.⁴⁵ But the Secretary of the Navy and the President condemned Ashmun's actions. The government had not "intended to authorize ... a forcible and warlike attack upon the citizens or subjects of any nation . . . to advance the cause of humanity." The new agent was warned to keep the business of the Colonisation Society and the US Agency separate.⁴⁶

Washington wanted a discrete approach to West Africa that respected the national mood and minimised potential conflict with other nations. Instead, Ashmun's actions gave ammunition to those who condemned the President's Africa plan. Senator Robert Young Hayne, Jacksonian of South Carolina, declared that Ashmun's actions reflected poorly on the United States and threatened the trade of other nations along the coast. Congressional support for US West African efforts fell so far that by 23 May 1828 the House of Representatives passed a Bill closing the US African agency. The House abolished the agency and the Senate began a full, but small, debate on funding for slave trade suppression; many agreed that the Society's use of government funds was improper. Consequently, by 3 March 1831, they asked the President to resume talks with other maritime powers for the suppression of the slave trade.⁴⁷

and Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 89.

⁴⁵ *S.Doc., No. 1*, 19th Cong., 2nd sess., 98-99, John Chase, 31 July 1826.

⁴⁶ *S.Doc., No. 1*, 19th Cong., 2nd sess., 99-101, Samuel L. Southard to John W. Peaco, 10 August 1826 and Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement*, 161-168.

⁴⁷ United States, *Register of Debates*, 19th Cong., 2nd sess., 290-296 and 326-334, Senate, 7 and 9 February 1827; United States, *Register of Debates*, 20th Cong., 1st sess., 2753, House, 23 May 1828; United States, *Register of Debates*, 20th Cong., 1st sess., 808-809, Senate, 24 May 1828; and United States, *Register of Debates*, 21st Cong., 2nd sess., 850, House, 3 March 1831.

Nevertheless, domestic imperatives were clear. On 28 March 1832, those in the Senate against colonisation expressed their displeasure because it threatened the Union and Southern sensibilities. They opined that any discussion of colonisation would “undoubtedly tend to increase the excitement which now prevails in one quarter of the Union” respecting abolition.⁴⁸ Perhaps to avoid a full US overseas commitment, Congress had placed the onus on the White House to enter talks with the British for a more effective means of suppressing the slave trade. But when talks failed the White House abandoned the issue. In the long term, as tempers between North and South flared, little else could be accomplished so long as American expansion in Africa and possible slave trade suppression were linked.

Limited US Naval Support

The limited naval support for West African endeavours reflected the limited government support for African colonisation. The government only provided US Navy support with forces it could spare from other duties, namely the West Indian piracy patrols. When the force on that patrol was reduced, it had ramifications for early US African efforts. Judd Scott Harmon concluded that the US Navy and the American Colonisation Society had a “marriage” whereby they complemented each other in the effort to suppress the slave trade.⁴⁹ Harmon claimed that the navy made regular voyages to the coast, but failed to state whether a November-December cruise, for example, meant 30 November to 7 December, or an entire two-month patrol. In reality it was hardly a “naval force” on “constant patrol of the coast[;]” US warships were only there for brief periods at the end of piracy patrols.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ United States, *Register of Debates*, 22nd Cong., 1st sess., 642-646, Senate, 28 March 1832.

⁴⁹ Judd Scott Harmon, “Marriage of Convenience: The United States Navy in Africa, 1820-1843,” *American Neptune*, 1972, 32(4): 264-276.

⁵⁰ Harmon, “Suppress and Protect,” 264-276.

As the piracy crisis deepened, US warships first had to tackle that immediate threat before sailing to a region far removed from American interests. For example, after relinquishing some pirate prizes, the *Shark*, Matthew Perry commanding, arrived on the African coast on 23 August 1822, but left again nine days later. Perry reported that he found, or heard, of no American ships involved in the slave trade. The Cape colony was fine and relations good with the natives. The latter observation reveals how little time Perry must have spent on the coast, given the tensions that erupted into native attacks by November. The *Shark* then returned to the West Indies, sailed by the pirate lair of Cape San Antonio, and onward to Norfolk via the Gulf of Florida.⁵¹ Meanwhile, the *Cyane* arrived off the West African coast in the spring of 1823 after a “long cruise in the West Indies” patrolling for pirates. Captain Robert T. Spence, exhausted, filed his report from quarantine in New York after a year on patrol.⁵²

By 1826, the US Navy reduced its efforts against the pirates as that crisis waned. On 4 August 1826, Ashmun noticed the impact of what had transpired on the other side of the Atlantic and believed it had ramifications along the West African coast. The English, French, and Colombian “navies” had put the pirates and slavers on the defensive. Already, on 20 July 1826, pirates had attacked an American brig and schooner and seized \$5000 worth of cargo. The American settlement was deeply in debt to the Royal Navy, then cruising in the Bight. The Royal Navy had the widest net in which to catch pirates and slavers, but Ashmun feared the colony’s fate without American aid.⁵³

On 18 March 1827, Lieutenant Commander Otho Norris, USS *Shark*, confirmed some of Ashmun’s observations. Norris sailed from the Chesapeake for Mesurado on 30

⁵¹ *S.Doc., No. 1*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., paper h, 125, M.C. Perry to Secretary of the Navy, 12 December 1822.

⁵² *S.Doc., No. 2*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., paper j, 128 and paper L, 130-134, R.T. Spence to J. Ashmun, 1 April 1823 and Robert T. Spence to Secretary of the Navy, 27 June 1823.

⁵³ NA, RG 45, Letters received relating to African Colonization, J. Ashmun to S.L. Southard, 4 August 1826.

November 1826 and arrived at the Cape on 12 January. The *Shark* arrived at Trade Town on 29 January and chased a small French schooner for ten hours. It was a slaver manned by seventeen French sailors, flying the French flag, and armed with a brass pivot gun. Meanwhile, the colony was doing well, but a pirate brig that had attacked an American merchant ship at Mesurado Roads in August 1826 was captured in December by a British warship.⁵⁴

As the 1830s ended, slavers continued to hide under the American flag. American naval response continued to be reactive: as a result of the reports, the Secretary of the Navy, J.K. Paulding, and the President decided to send a warship to the coast. Paulding wrote that it would protect commerce and pursue “these pirates [slavers] who thus make the American flag a cover to such disgraceful purposes.”⁵⁵ In all, US naval actions along the West African coast were limited and confined to tacit support of colonisation efforts. Due to the character of West African policy, the navy took little significant action against the slave trade. With such a small naval force, and a reluctance to agree with British proposals for co-operation against the slave trade, Anglo-American naval co-operation was also limited and informal, as had occurred in the Gulf of Mexico. But off West Africa, the less constrained Royal Navy used sea power more fully in support of British policies.

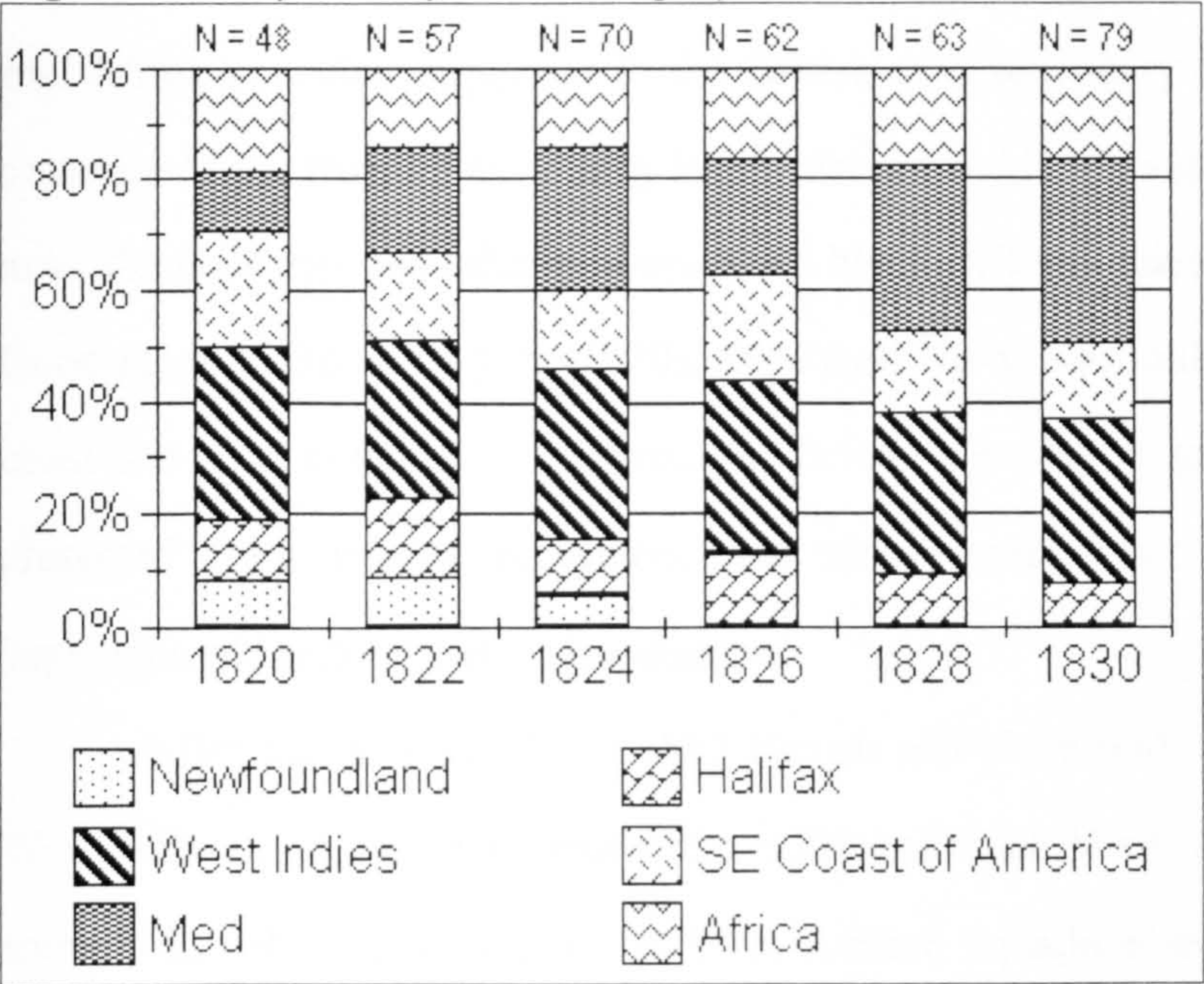
The Royal Navy off West Africa

During the 1820s and early 1830s, the Royal Navy off West Africa was responsible for meeting the immediate goal of suppressing the slave trade and hunting stray pirates. But the Royal Navy had to contend with slavers who had at least the tacit approval of their governments. By the 1840s, some other nations participated in anti-slaving operations

⁵⁴ *S.Doc., No. 1*, 20th Cong., 1st sess., 224-225, Otho Norris to Charles Ridgely, 18 March 1827.

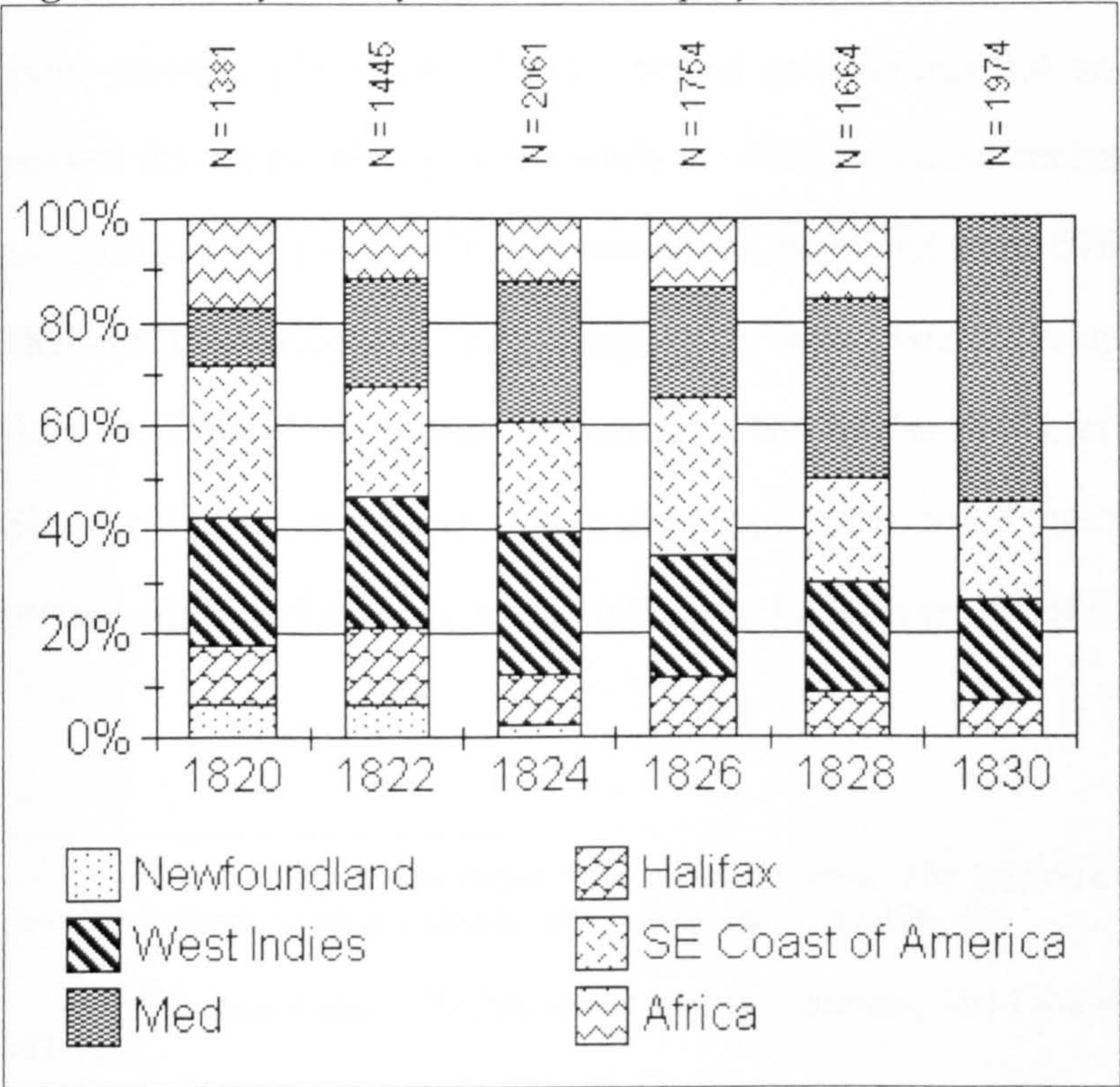
⁵⁵ NA, RG 45, Letters sent relating to African Colonization, J.K. Paulding to Thomas Buchanan, 22 July 1839.

Figure 4.4 Royal Navy Vessel Deployment Atlantic, 1820-1830



Source: Calculated from PRO, Navy List, 1820-1830.
Note: Vessels such as supply depots, convict ships, vessels conducting surveys, etc., are not counted. SE = Southeast; Med = Mediterranean.

Figure 4.5 Royal Navy Armament Deployed, 1820-1830



Source: Calculated from PRO, Navy List, 1820-1830.
Note: Armament information for the Africa station is missing from the Navy List for 1830. SE = Southeast; Med = Mediterranean.

but the Royal Navy realised blockading ports was ineffectual.⁵⁶ During the Victorian era, Africa was also important to the British as a secondary trade route to India. The presence of the Royal Navy along West Africa would help suppress the slave trade and meet the concerns that other powers could block British access to India via the Cape of Good Hope.⁵⁷ But during the 1820s, the Royal Navy also told London that the African coast had great potential to contribute to Britain's economic growth. This too had to be protected from pirates, privateers, and slave traders who all interfered with the expansion of legitimate British commerce.

After the passage of the 1807 British anti-slave trade Act, London created the West African squadron to patrol the 3000 miles of West African coast for British ships.⁵⁸ Lloyd concluded that the West African squadron was of little import to the Admiralty with only an average of ten warships on station. Eltis supports this view with calculations that show only about 4% of British naval manpower was devoted to the coast during the 1820s and 1830s.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, British naval deployment matched their strategic philosophy for the period (see figures 4.4 and 4.5). The West Indies peaked during the piracy crisis, while the Mediterranean became increasingly important, as indicated by the doubling of armament deployed from 576 guns to 1082 guns over 1828-1830, during the deepening crisis over Greek independence. The squadron fluctuated with British strategic concerns. But by the 1840s, as will be shown in Chapter Six, the British combined slave trade suppression, trade promotion, and their desire to protect control of this important route to India from potential French threats.

⁵⁶ W.E.F. Ward, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers: The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1969), 38-39 and 196-199.

⁵⁷ Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 13-14 and Reynolds, *Command of the Sea*, 333-343.

⁵⁸ Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 574 and 576.

⁵⁹ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 69-73; Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, 97 and 113; and Eltis, *Economic Growth*, table 2, 92.

The size of the West African squadron, relative to the long coastline, had an impact on the strategy it employed. A blockade along the entire coast to suppress the slave trade was “impossible,” instead the Royal Navy cruised between “specific points.” The patrol area comprised Senegal to Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone to Cape Coast Castle, and from Cape Coast Castle to the Bights. From 1832 to 1839, the West African station was combined with the Cape station and responsible for an area from 10°S on the East coast to Cape Verde. Even when the Admiralty took the West African squadron out of the Cape command again, it was expanded to include the area from Cape Verde to Benguela.⁶⁰

While the British were interested in suppressing the slave trade for humanitarian reasons, naval officers also told London of Africa’s economic potential. In 1821, Commodore George R. Collier reported that the interior of the country might soon be opened to British trade. In addition, the island of Fernando Po, with soil that rivalled that of the West Indian colonies, was also in a strategic location to help stop the slave trade. Collier believed that if warships were stationed at Fernando Po they could blockade the Camaroons, Del Rey, Calabar and Bonny Rivers, and sortie just below the equator. Merchants from Glasgow and Liverpool were interested in Fernando Po, wood was also plentiful, as were oysters and fish. Collier and his crew even managed to trade with some of the natives who came out to the beach.⁶¹

The region had potential, perhaps a region that English “gentlemen” could help develop. But first the slave trade had to be suppressed to shift local production factors into “legitimate” commerce. British merchants complained about the duties that King Peppel forced them to pay on the Bonny River, while the slave traders received preference. Peppel professed that the slave trade was his primary means of support, but

⁶⁰ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 69 and 78.

⁶¹ IUP, vol. 64, *Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade*, IV, Communications to the Admiralty, 16, 23-27 and 29, no. 17, “Extract of a Report from Commodore Sir George R. Collier,” 27 December 1821.

he would end it if the English monarch sent a 74-gun ship annually to his kingdom, loaded with tribute. Commodore Sir Robert Mends believed the warship would help keep the reluctant King an ally. Nevertheless, the Americans and French proved more troublesome than the natives did. After encounters with their merchant vessels, Mends concluded that the French and Americans “had determined to put every one of our people to death who fell into their hands[.]” Consequently, he believed that sea power was needed to further and protect a variety of British interests in the region.⁶²

General Admiralty instructions to Commodore Mends and others provide an indication of Royal Navy duties during the 1820s. They were to provide assistance to British African settlements and stop the slave trade by British ships and those countries with whom Britain had anti-slaving treaties. In contrast to the Gulf of Mexico, the Admiralty told Mends to hunt Spanish slavers because Spain’s right to take slaves from below the equator had expired, and all Spanish slavers could be searched. Meanwhile, orders to stop Spanish and Portuguese slavers, in accordance with treaty stipulations, were sent from 6 February 1821 to 21 March 1822 to vessels on the East Indies, Cape of Good Hope, South American, Leeward Islands, and Jamaican stations.⁶³

The navy found that slavers often loaded their human cargo up rivers, hoping to stay clear of British warships. For example, on 10 August 1821, the *Myrmidon* found six French slavers in the Bonny River. Meanwhile, the British tried in vain to seize some Spanish ships, but they became embroiled in a firefight. Captain Henry Leeke decided to take the *Myrmidon* upriver “to punish the renegadoes for their insolent conduct.” The Spanish abandoned their ship when the warship approached, and 130 slaves were freed from the schooner and 154 from the brig. Leeke preferred this course

⁶² IUP, vol. 65, Communications received by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, from Naval Officers, since the 21st March 1822, 6-13, no. 4 and no. 5, “Copy of a Report on the state of the Slave Trade on the Western Coast of Africa, by Commodore Sir Robert Mends,” 26 June 1822 and Robert Mends to John Wilson Croker, 17 April 1822.

⁶³ IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, IV, Instructions to Naval Officers, 33-36, “Extract from the Instructions issued by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty . . . to Commodore Sir Robert Mends,” 31 October 1821.

because, reportedly, the King of Bonny preferred slavers and refused to deal with legitimate British merchants. Only if the slave trade was suppressed, some officers believed, would legitimate commerce take its place.⁶⁴

Along with slavers, the Royal Navy met threats to legitimate commerce from privateers that operated along the West African coast during this period. Commodore George R. Collier concluded that Spanish and Portuguese slavers were the biggest threat in the early 1820s. Meanwhile, he opined, “piracy” and the slave trade were linked. The biggest cause of slavery on the West African coast was the “piracy” in the New World. Despite the fact that Spain had signed an anti-slaving treaty with Britain, Spanish subjects carried on the trade, and slavers often hid under the guise of a privateering commission. For example, on 16 February 1821, the *Myrmidon* stopped the 2-gun Spanish privateer *Charlotta* before she bought slaves at Gallinas.⁶⁵

As late as September 1825, Commodore Charles Bullen reported that armed “Spanish” ships also arrived daily along the coast and annoyed British traders. He concluded that the Spanish ships obtained “their cargo for trade chiefly by plunder; by which means they are enabled to purchase their slaves at a much more reasonable rate than other vessels[.]” Bullen tried to chase one of the pirates, the Spanish brig *Alerta*, but it ran into Lagos Roads, loaded her slaves, and quickly sailed for Havana before he could stop her. Ships involved in the slave trade took advantage of letters of marque, issued by the Spanish, under which to hide their activities. For example, in November 1825, William Pennell, British consul in Bahia, reported that the *Carlota*, a Spanish

⁶⁴ IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, IV, Communications to the Admiralty, 4, no. 7, “Copy of a Letter from Commodore Sir G.R. Collier to J.W. Croker, Esq.,” 12 March 1821 and IUP, vol. 65, Communications received by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, from Naval Officers, since the 21st March 1822, 3-4, no. 1, Henry John Leeke to Sir Robert Mends, 12 September 1821.

⁶⁵ IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, IV, 30, Communications to the Admiralty, no. 17, “Extract of a Report from Commodore Sir George R. Collier,” 27 December 1821 and IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, IV, 2, Communications to the Admiralty, Henry J. Leeke to George Collier, 20 February 1821, enclosure with “Copy of a Letter from Commodore Sir Geo. R. Collier,” 4 March 1821.

privateer, had sailed with seven British sailors, and was probably involved in the slave trade. By 25 February 1826, the Admiralty passed along the intelligence regarding the *Carlota* to its vessels along the African coast.⁶⁶

Early Anglo-American Naval Co-operation

Both navies were deployed to use sea power in different parts of the equatorial Atlantic for divergent “short-term” objectives, like commerce protection. But the conduit of Anglo-American naval relations illuminates the state of their wider relations. The nations had different objectives, therefore their co-operative uses of sea power were minimal and intended to stave off potential conflict rather than truly resolve outstanding issues between them. The Americans hoped to placate the British with American sea power to reduce tensions over slave trade suppression. The sporadic effort failed to impress London and the Royal Navy remained the only force willing to police the entire equatorial Atlantic. But to achieve their economic goals, London needed American co-operation to suppress the slave trade and encourage legitimate commerce.

During early Anglo-American talks, John Quincy Adams was under pressure from the British to step up efforts against the slavers. On 30 December 1820, Adams explained that the President desired some form of co-operation with Britain to suppress the slave trade. Adams professed, despite the clear evidence that the US naval presence on the West African coast was sporadic, that US warships had “for some time [been] kept stationed on the Coast which is the scene of this odious traffic.” The British tacitly agreed on Anglo-American co-operation, and the Admiralty was told to pass on the understanding to its African squadron. Adams stalled and only told the American Navy Department of the agreement on 15 September 1821. Meanwhile, in 1820 and 1821, the

⁶⁶ IUP, vol. 68, Communications received by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, from Naval Officers, since the 1st January 1824, 7, no. 6, Commodore Bullen to J.W. Croker, 12 September 1825; and IUP, vol. 68, Instructions issued by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to Naval Officers, since 1 January 1824, 19, no. 7 and enclosures 1 and 2 in no. 7, John Barrow to Commodore Bullen, 25 February 1826, William Pennell to Consul Chamberlain, 23 November 1825, and W. Pennell to Viscount of Queluz, 21 November 1825.

Hornet and *John Adams* had sailed with *HMS Snapper*, and the British and Americans exchanged intelligence.⁶⁷

Britain accepted the American position, but quickly realised it was too good to be true. In May 1821, the Admiralty ordered its warships to give “general assistance” to any US warships as long as it was “consistent with the existing treaties and rights of both nations, and with the friendly relations and perfect amity subsisting between them.” Stratford Canning, British ambassador to Washington, attempted to foster a degree of commonality between the nations and forwarded to Adams details of the Admiralty’s instructions. Canning hoped that it would provide guidance for the composition of orders to “any American vessels destined to cruise on the coast of Africa.” But he told the Admiralty that “[i]t does not appear that the American government has, at this moment, more than one vessel, a schooner, expressly commissioned against the Slave Trade[.]”⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Canning told Adams that the British would consider American proposals for some system of joint patrols, rather than fight over their differences. His government was willing to consider a proposal that would see the “cruizers of the several maritime powers [merged] into one common force for the protection of the African coast[.]” The White House wanted Anglo-American forces to co-operate “by all suitable means.” But only if it was convenient were the American ships to cruise with the Royal Navy and provide the British with any information related to the slave trade.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Earl E. McNeilly, “The United States Navy and the Suppression of the West African Slave Trade 1819-1862” (PhD diss., Case Western University, 1973), 51-52 and NA, RG 45, Letters received relating to African Colonization, “Extract of a Letter from the Secretary of State to Mr. Canning dated Washington 30 December 1820,” in John Quincy Adams [unsigned] to Smith Thompson [unaddressed], 15 August 1821.

⁶⁸ IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, IV, Instructions to Naval Officers, 33, no. 1, “Copy a Letter from Mr. [John] Barrow to Commodore Sir George Ralph Collier,” 24 May 1821; and IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, III, 324 and 413, Slave Trade: Correspondence with Foreign Powers, 44 and IV, Instructions to Naval Officers, 33, Joseph Planta, Foreign Office, 12 May 1821 and Stratford Canning to the Marquess of Londonderry, 4 June 1821.

⁶⁹ IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, III, Slave Trade: Correspondence with Foreign Powers, 44-45, enclosures in no. 70, Stratford Canning to John Quincy Adams, 1 June 1821; NA, RG 45, Letters received relating to African Colonization, John Quincy Adams [unsigned] to Smith

In 1821, Commodore George R. Collier reported that in response to the passage of strong American laws against slaving, the American officers carried out their task with “the greatest zeal[.]” Stratford Canning also had some praise for the limited American effort. The American schooners along the African coast in the early 1820s had some effect. The US ship *Alligator* had captured four slavers believed to be American ships. But he noticed the weak American commitment. The *Alligator* had left the coast and Canning had no idea when another ship might appear.⁷⁰ The nations had hit upon a limited form of co-operation, but the Americans were along the coast for other reasons. The American policy-making process and goals resulted in limited numbers of ships to the West African coast. Thus, Anglo-American co-operation was largely informal and unsuccessful. But while relations were tense, the nations opted for limited co-operative efforts with sea power, while hoping for better arrangements over points of contention.

The most successful operations resulted from intelligence sharing. For example, in late 1821, the Royal Navy stopped the slaver *Dolphin*, but the *Dolphin*’s captain was confident that the British would free her because she flew American colours. Meanwhile, the British had a plan for Anglo-American co-operation. They offered to repair and man the *Augusta* and put her under the command of an American officer, Midshipman Harry D. Hunter. If the ship encountered an American slaver, Hunter would seize it; otherwise, the British would seize the ship. By 5 February 1822, Captain Benedictus Kelly, commanding British West African forces, sent an officer to the *Augusta* and handed over intelligence about the *Dolphin*, then reportedly in the Rio Pongo. Hunter told Secretary Thompson that “[i]n pursuance of my duty as the only

Thompson [unaddressed], 15 August 1821; and IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, III, Slave Trade: Correspondence with Foreign Powers, 48, third enclosure in no. 72, “Instructions to American ships of war,” in John Quincy Adams to Stratford Canning, 15 August 1821.

⁷⁰ IUP, vol. 64, 410, Communications to the Admiralty, no. 17, “Extract of a Report from Commodore Sir George R. Collier,” 27 December 1821 and IUP, vol. 64, Further Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, III, Slave Trade: Correspondence with Foreign Powers, 45, no. 72, Stratford Canning to the Marquess of Londonderry, 4 September 1821.

Naval Officer on the coast” he sailed in the *Augusta* to investigate. Hunter located the vessel and concluded from the ship’s log that she also went by the name *Florida*, until she sailed for the African coast from Charleston to get slaves. Fresh from success, Hunter and the British continued their patrol.⁷¹

Nevertheless, by the close of the decade, and US naval retrenchment, the Royal Navy was the only effective force across the equatorial Atlantic. After the coronation of King William IV, US Ambassador Louis McLane provided Washington with details on what was being done by the British and Americans to fight the last remains of piracy along the West Indian-West African route. The brig *Manzanares*, accused of piracy, sailed from Havana on 31 August 1829 for the African coast, and en route it had attacked the Boston vessel *Candace*. The American government stationed warships off Havana and Matanzas and ordered the *Manzanares* captured. But on 14 July 1830, McLane received word from Lord Aberdeen that they had found the ship. The Royal Navy brig *Black Joke* captured the *Manzanares* on 1 April 1830, off Gallinas, and delivered it to the Mixed Commission court at Sierra Leone. It had violated the Anglo-Spanish treaty on the slave trade, and the British found on board over 300 slaves.⁷²

Conclusion

During the 1820s, Anglo-American relations remained tense, but they sought to use sea power and minimise disputes while furthering their separate objectives. When the disintegration of the Spanish-American Empire threatened British and American trade, they deployed navies to protect it. Traditional American naval policy abhorred a strong navy, but when US interests were threatened, policy makers reached a compromise.

⁷¹ NA, RG 45, Letters received relating to African Colonization, R.F. Stockton to Harry D. Hunter, 16 December 1821, Harry D. Hunter to Smith Thompson, 19 February 1822, and E. Ayres to Smith Thompson, 24 February 1823.

⁷² NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 21, Louis McLane to Martin Van Buren, 6 July 1830, W.F. Macleay to Aberdeen, 22 April 1830 in Louis McLane to Martin Van Buren, 6 July 1830 and no. 22, Aberdeen to Louis McLane, 10 July 1830 and William Smith to Aberdeen, 8 April 1830 in Louis McLane to Martin Van Buren, 14 July 1830.

They sent Commodore Porter to the Gulf of Mexico, and the US Navy patrolled for pirates, warned off privateers, and instituted convoys. After the United States secured its territorial desires, the navy had clear objectives and little political interference from Washington, but avoided provoking other nations. In contrast, the Royal Navy was subject to the policy restraints imposed by Canning. He wished conditions to be ripe before recognising the rebel states, and London was wary of forceful actions for fear of sparking European intervention before British objectives were secured. Consequently, naval reinforcements were restrained.

While wary of the US in the Gulf, London wanted a larger US force along the African coast and had few qualms about giving access to a potential rival. Strategic considerations along the West African coast mirrored the Gulf of Mexico. The British had a clear objective: slave trade suppression for humanitarian reasons and they needed Washington's help to stop slavers hiding under the US flag. While the Americans reached a consensus to deploy a large naval force to suppress piracy, slave trade suppression was more complex because of American domestic constraints. Still, the Americans diverted the occasional vessel from the Gulf piracy patrol to the West African coast to appease Britain. Meanwhile, London and her officers became aware of the economic potential of the West African coast. When the piracy threat ended, US naval retrenchment left the West African coast devoid of American warships, and the Royal Navy unchallenged in the equatorial Atlantic until it was in American interest to establish a permanent African squadron.

Chapter Five: Forging a Naval Conduit, 1830-1842

By 1842, Anglo-American interests converged sufficiently to allow an agreement governing naval co-operation along the West African coast. The tactical use of sea power to hunt slavers and provide immediate commerce protection generated Anglo-American conflict. But the strategic decision to use sea power to further long-term objectives peacefully provided a conduit through which both nations could reduce tensions. In Britain, lobbyists, like Fowell Buxton, pressured the government to use the navy to suppress the slave trade to promote legitimate African commerce. But leaders like Lord Palmerston and Sir Robert Peel subscribed to the liberal philosophy of only pushing other powers so far over minor issues like slave trade suppression. Co-operation was preferable to war. Politically, London connected African commerce growth with slave trade suppression, but refrained from war to impose its views on “established” nation-states like the United States. In America, Washington also came under increasing pressure from Northern merchants to protect and promote avenues of increasing commerce, such as along the West African coast.

By the early 1840s, Secretary of State Daniel Webster and Secretary of the Navy Abel P. Upshur promoted using the US Navy for peaceful strategic goals like protecting and promoting African commerce. However, the political climate in the United States remained wary of slavery issues and Anglo-American tension remained high over freedom of the seas. The *Amistad* and *Creole* cases raised the ire of many in the South, fearful of how the legal slave trade may be interfered with. But a rebellion in Canada, and the Maine-New Brunswick border dispute, opened an opportunity to settle outstanding issues between the United States and Britain. In London, the new free trade Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, dispatched Lord Ashburton, of the Baring family, to Washington for talks with Webster. They settled the border dispute and developed a plan for West African co-operation. British liberalism and America’s growing commercial hopes meant a compromise was possible over the use of sea power along

the West African coast to preserve Anglo-American relations and to move forward their separate objectives. American and British warships would cruise in pairs. To avoid Anglo-American conflict, the US Navy would stop suspicious American-flagged vessels and the Royal Navy would only stop suspicious vessels of other nations.

Palmerston's Foreign Policy, the Slave Trade, and the United States

Henry John Temple, an Irish land owner, and later Lord Palmerston, was a member of the elite. He first gained a prominence in foreign affairs when Canning kept him in the War Office, and grew in importance as Foreign Secretary (1830-34; 1835-41 and 1846-51) and finally as Prime Minister (1855 and 1859-1865). Palmerston studied the works of Adam Smith in Edinburgh during his youth, but believed that there was a role for diplomacy.¹ He accepted the liberal, *laissez-faire* philosophy, but also wanted to protect British interests. He supported free trade, despised the slave trade, and pushed other powers, like the United States, to suppress it. But if they really objected, peace was more important. Muriel E. Chamberlain concluded that Palmerston adhered to Lord Castlereagh's doctrine of non-interference in the affairs of other nations so long as British interests were maintained. Consequently, Palmerston "pleaded for a right to 'interfere' in every way 'short of actual force'."² Because of his duration and influence, Palmerston symbolises the remarkable continuity in British foreign policy during this period.

The "Eastern Question" and its relationship with the "Liberal Movement" illustrate Palmerston's style of foreign policy. Overseas, the drive for Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire in the late 1820s was something that public opinion in Britain, France, and Russia, supported as a liberal movement. But London also had to balance liberalism with her strategic concerns. The European powers

¹ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 84-86.

² Muriel E. Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston* (Britain: GPC Books, 1987), 33-40.

supported Greek independence, joined together, and destroyed the Turkish and Egyptian fleets at Navarino (1827) that sought to stifle Greek independence. Yet, another danger was clear: “[f]rom Constantinople she [Russia] could challenge the whole British position in the Mediterranean[.]” Britain had to strengthen Turkey to counter Russia and balance the strategic loss suffered by the political success of liberalism.³

The “Liberal Movement” believed in “representative government” and “majority rule[.]” The French revolution of 1830 liberalised the constitution and established a constitutional monarchy; “order prevailed, the *bourgeois* [emphasis in original] were in control, the business of France and Europe could continue.” The revolution showed Britain, and members of the elite like Palmerston, that gradual evolution was possible. Domestically, it enabled the first Reform Bill (1832) to be realised, giving a broader constituency power.⁴ But the Turkish vassal in Egypt, Mehemet Ali, also caused problems. He vied for more power and threatened British trade routes through the Red Sea to India. Meanwhile, “wherever the British found their progress impeded by the Egyptians they found the French behind the Egyptians.” Anglo-French relations grew tense when Thiers became French Premier and openly supported Ali.⁵

By 1839, Foreign Secretary Palmerston was concerned that the Russians would take advantage of the situation, and the Royal Navy deployed to the Dardanelles. Palmerston hoped that Ali might be satisfied if he and his family were given “hereditary possession of Egypt” in exchange for the end of his occupation of Syria.⁶ Ali refused, and the British bombarded Acre in response. But the French failed to support Ali and, with the other interested powers, signed the Straits Convention of 13 July 1841,

³ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, vol. 1, 76-87.

⁴ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, vol. 1, 76-80.

⁵ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 38-43.

⁶ Bourne, *Palmerston*, 577-580 and 618-620.

forbidding warships to cross the Dardanelles in peacetime.⁷ British support for “higher” goals was predicated on maintaining her security and economic interests.

Palmerston’s approach was to use force when needed, but he sought co-operation with other powers to further British objectives. This philosophy matched his liberal views and foreign policy objectives. In 1837, for example, Palmerston linked his foreign and trade policies when discussing another crisis, over access to China, with Lord Minto at the Admiralty. Palmerston concluded that unless Britain wanted to go to war with every maritime power to “maintain a monopoly” on trade, the nation must accept “American & French settlements in the Eastern seas.” Besides, he concluded, commerce and “civilization” brought to the “savage races” would help all “civilized & trading nations.”⁸ Only when another power, like France, threatened a monopoly would Palmerston support intervention. His primary goal remained “the balance of power in Europe, as the essential prerequisite for the security of the United Kingdom.”⁹ Furthermore, the British applied such “pragmatic” liberalism to Anglo-American relations over the slave trade.

Palmerston supported the idea to replace the slave trade at its origins in Africa, with legitimate British commerce, but he was also conservative and initially voted against abolition. Still, he recognised that British public opinion was against the slave trade, making it good political capital. He had failed to appreciate this fact when he first ran for Parliament in Cambridge, and it eroded some of his support. For several reasons, personal and economic, Palmerston constantly pressured other world powers, like the United States, to secure slave trade suppression treaties. He rested recognition of Texas on it agreeing to a slave trade treaty, and when the Portuguese seemed reluctant to meet their treaty obligations Parliament gave him the power to “treat their slavers also as if

⁷ Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston*, 54-55.

⁸ Bourne, *Palmerston*, 552 and 624-625 and Palmerston to Minto, September 1837, quoted in Bourne, *Palmerston*, 625.

⁹ Bourne, *Palmerston*, 623-626.

they were British criminals.” Bourne concluded that Palmerston’s zeal against the slave trade became part of his “personal mythology[.]”¹⁰

While growing to support slave trade suppression, Palmerston’s liberal philosophy also meant that he was “personally uninterested in adventurous schemes to contest American power.” When it came to the US-Canada border disputes, for example, Bourne concluded that “his policy was merely to postpone the matter by arranging joint surveys and commissions ... until American feelings were quietened down[.]” Lord John Russell feared an Anglo-American war over the Canadian boundary, but concluded that “Palmerston was definitely playing it down in order to concentrate on Egypt” and Mohammed Ali, a more important concern. British adherence to liberalism meant that they desired to relate with the United States without going to war unless important British interests were threatened. Palmerston furthered avenues of opportunity when they materialised, but while trying to obtain a slave trade treaty with Texas, for example, he refrained from action to secure greater influence in Texas.¹¹

But in the United States, petitions against slavery flooded Congress and Southern members decided to put an end to the debate. The political climate was cool toward anything connected with the divisive slavery issue and shaped American diplomatic and naval relations with the British. During his Presidency, Adams avoided dealing with slavery and its suppression. Southern opinion, and that of the nation, forbade any talk of ending it. By 1836, Congress, in the face of opposition from Adams, then in Congress and claiming that debate was an issue of freedom of speech, instituted the so-called “Gag Rule” and suspended debate. A climate of fear had settled on the nation, while President Martin Van Buren agreed to veto any Bill that tried to suppress slavery in the capital or any of the States. Bemis wrote that a “white terror backed up

¹⁰ Bourne, *Palmerston*, 622-624.

¹¹ Bourne, *Palmerston*, 586-587 and 597.

the heavy legal censorship with vigilance committees and lynch law.”¹² Britain’s option was either war with the United States to force opinion change, or continued diplomatic pressure.

Market Expansion and Anglo-American Diplomacy in the 1830s

During the 1820s piracy crisis, the British feared that the Royal Navy would interfere with the government’s desire to secure exclusive access to trade in the Western equatorial Atlantic. But during the 1830s and early 1840s, London also used sea power to further the growth of national wealth under the joint banner of slave trade suppression and free trade. The combined pressure from a variety of sources led Britain to end slavery formally in all her colonies. Britain then increased efforts to use sea power to end the slave trade. But many believed that it continued because of US participation in the trade, slowing British success. London believed that the US had to be convinced to police American citizens involved in the traffic, or slavers of other nations that hid under the protection of falsely flying the American flag.

During the late 1830s, British Quakers, Buxton’s Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade, and others, continued pressuring the British government for action.¹³ Britons, like Buxton, hoped to encourage the development and expansion of legal African goods, like palm oil. He concluded that the Royal Navy could be used to “drive them [slave traders] out of a river and keep them out, then the African’s hunger for trade goods might lead him to turn to oil.”¹⁴ The two primary methods to implement the new strategy were to “Impede the Traffic” and “Establish Commerce.” He thought that natives would welcome trade with Europeans, and they only needed encouragement.

¹² Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 326-340 and 352-383.

¹³ Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 650-658.

¹⁴ J. Gallagher, “Fowell Buxton and the New African Policy, 1838-1842,” *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 10 (1950): 38-39.

Buxton urged the government to sign treaties with natives along the coast and inland, and “settle factories and send out trading ships.”¹⁵ He reminded a Colonial Office, connected to the gentlemanly capitalists, that Africa offered the potential of “millions of customers, who may be taught to grow the raw material which we require, and who require the manufactured commodities which we produce.”¹⁶ Buxton thus appealed directly to the gentlemanly capitalist ethic that might see Africa’s investment potential, helped by the power of the Royal Navy.

Palmerston agreed with such a use for the navy and secured the lucrative island of Fernando Po for the British. By 1841, the British sent a naval expedition up the Niger in search of new avenues of trade. The expedition signed treaties with natives to abolish the slave trade and trade with the British in legitimate goods. The expedition was largely a failure, succumbed to African disease, and returned home in disgrace.¹⁷ But British humanitarian goals for slave trade suppression had formed a nexus with their economic goal of developing Africa and it established British strategy for the Eastern equatorial Atlantic for the next 20 years. Nevertheless, as the United States was a major market for slaves, they needed American co-operation to further British policy. London was unwilling to go to war with Washington to force a change in American attitude.

Instead, London continued to apply diplomatic and naval pressure on the Americans. While slavers hid under the US flag, British strategy was futile. American representatives in London were aware of the British position and the pressure the public

¹⁵ R.H. Mottram, *Buxton the Liberator* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Publishers, Ltd., 1946), 118-126. The direct quotes originate from Mottram’s quotes and reprints from Buxton and his Society.

¹⁶ Buxton quoted in Gallagher, “Fowell Buxton,” 45.

¹⁷ Howard Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty: A Study in Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1843* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 72; McNeilly, “United States Navy,” 94 and 97-99; Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 650-658; Gallagher, “Fowell Buxton,” 47-58. Technological problems constrained European penetration into Africa. Until proper medicine, white Europeans succumbed to African diseases to which they had no natural immunity (Gallagher, “Fowell Buxton,” 50-51 and 56). For details on the technological problems that faced European expansion, see Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), in particular, chapter 3, “Malaria, Quinine, and the Penetration of Africa.”

placed on the government. In 1833, the US Ambassador told Washington about the zealots and lobbyists who sent petitions to the government, and the public outcry against the slave trade that left the government with little diplomatic manoeuvring room. Regardless, the British tried to woo the Americans informally to let the Royal Navy stop US-flagged ships. Each time, the Americans reiterated their belief that the British position would violate the freedom of the seas.¹⁸ Slowly over the 1830s, Anglo-American disagreements over the slave trade accumulated. The British reported that US ships were continually involved in the slave trade and Britain wanted America to act against them and enforce American laws.

The 1830s was a bad decade for the slaves. After the Haitian revolts in the early century and British abolition of slavery in her colonies, including the West Indies, Cuba and Puerto Rico met the demand for cheap, slave-grown sugar and coffee.¹⁹ During 1831-35, 104,641 slaves were embarked along the African coast and 88,493 were delivered to their destination. The next five-year period was even more horrific. The number of slaves embarked increased by three times to 328,540 slaves, of whom 282,416 were delivered successfully to their destination. The majority of the slaves captured during the 1830s originated from the West African coast. West-Central Africa accounted for 35% of the slaves captured during 1831-35; the Bight of Biafra (27.7%); the Bight of Benin (23.8%); Sierra Leone (11.3%); Senegambia (1.52%); the Windward Coast (0.45%); and the Gold Coast (0.31%). Data collected by today's scholars indicates that during 1836-40, the slave trade focussed particularly on West-Central Africa (50.50%). Other regions were less prominent than during the previous period: Southeast Africa (26.3%); the Bight of Biafra (8.82%); the Bight of Benin (8.56%);

¹⁸ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 67 and no. 68, Vail to Edward Livingston, 22 May 1833 and Vail to Edward Livingston, 29 May 1833.

¹⁹ Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 39-40 and 184.

Sierra Leone (4.22%); Senegambia (0.72%); the Gold Coast (0.53%); and the Windward Coast (0.33%).²⁰

This was the height of the slave trade during the mid-nineteenth century. During 1831-35, there were 329 slave trade voyages; the number increased by about three times by 1836-40, to 957 voyages. It is difficult to assess the origins of vessels involved in an illegal activity cloaked in secrecy, but there is no indication of any involvement in slaving voyages from the ports of New York, Baltimore, or New Orleans. However, statistics indicate that during 1831-35, one slaving vessel was built in Maryland and during 1836-40, the number increased to three vessels. It is likely that these statistics are an indication of a wider, better-concealed involvement by the port of Baltimore and her famous clipper ships. Indeed, historians have found that during 1831-35, there were two vessels involved in the slave trade registered in the United States; by 1836-40, the number had risen to 34 vessels.²¹

The 1286 voyages – an average of 129 per year – which occurred during the 1830s, brought slaves from Africa to largely New World destinations. Of the 329 voyages that occurred during 1831-35, 241 (73.3%) were deemed successful, while the British managed to stop 81 (24.6%) voyages. The remaining 2.1% of voyages met with various other unsuccessful outcomes. The main destination of the slaves was Cuba (64.7%). Other regions lagged behind considerably: Sierra Leone (14.6%); Rio de la Plata (8.10%); the Southeast Coast of Brazil (5.0%); Bahia (4.21%); while other destinations comprised the remaining 3.39%. Of the 957 voyages that occurred over 1836-40, 670 (70.0%) were recorded as successful, while the British stopped 267 (27.9%). The remaining 2.1% of voyages also met with various other unsuccessful outcomes. The destinations of the slaves were somewhat different. Demand shifted to the Southeast Coast of Brazil, which received 54.9% of the slaves. Cuba was the second

²⁰ Eltis, et al. *Slave Trade: A Database*.

²¹ Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*.

most prominent destination (28.7%); Sierra Leone (6.10%); Pernambuco (3.91%); Bahia (2.52%); while other destinations comprised the remaining 3.81%.²²

The battle was going poorly for the British. The slaver voyage success rate had fallen by 3.3%, and the British capture rate had increased slightly by 3.3%, but the number of slaving voyages had increased dramatically.²³ Palmerston was convinced that the Americans were to blame, but he believed that if pressured, they would act. During the 1830s, he forwarded numerous reports of specific US-flagged vessels involved in the slave trade. He enclosed extracts from the British commissioners at Havana, who believed that the slavers were encouraged by the President's declarations that he would sign no slave trade treaty.²⁴

Despite the diplomatic pressure, the United States rejected British proposals, offered few suggestions of their own, and remained focussed on the immediate goal of commerce protection. The Americans only became interested in negotiations with Britain when the internal American "coastal trade" in slaves was threatened. During late 1837 and 1838, Washington asked the British to enter into an agreement to govern slaving vessels that, involved in the "legitimate" internal US slave trade, found themselves shipwrecked on nearby British possessions. By November 1838, US Ambassador Andrew Stevenson told Washington that the British refused to consider such a treaty. Palmerston told the Americans that it was inconsistent with British policy. He concluded that if Britain made such an agreement with the United States, then other nations, like Spain and Portugal, would want similar agreements and it would collapse

²² Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*.

²³ Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*.

²⁴ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 14, Palmerston to A. Stevenson, 17 December 1836, in A. Stevenson to John Forsyth, 22 December 1836 and "Extract from British Commissioners at Havana, 25 October 1836," in Palmerston to A. Stevenson, 17 December 1836, in A. Stevenson to John Forsyth, 22 December 1836.

the British campaign. Stevenson concluded that any further talks with the present British government were futile.²⁵

London felt that increased American investment in the Cuban sugar trade had sparked an increased demand for cheap slave labour on the island. And in the 1830s, the slavers took advantage of the state of Anglo-American diplomacy over slave trade suppression and circumvented suppression activities. Flying the US flag would protect the slavers by the threat of a diplomatic dispute that would ensue if the Royal Navy stopped an American-flagged vessel. If the vessel encountered the rare US warship, then it could show foreign papers, flag, and be no concern to the Americans. But the British concluded that the slavers hid extensively under the American flag by 1836, and by 1837 the navy encountered them on the African coast. The British concluded that “[i]t will be seen that Spanish, Portuguese, and Brazilian Slave Traders, with out-laws and pirates of all nations, are now flocking under the cover of the American Flag.” British representatives opined that ships were built and equipped in American ports, sailed to the Cape Verde Islands – or Havana – under the American flag, and were handed over to Portuguese or Spanish owners. The Royal Navy encountered such American ships as the *Washington*, *Joseph Hand*, and *Cleopatra* operating under such a scheme in late 1837. The British concluded that the people of Baltimore were particularly involved.²⁶

Statistics provide some support for the British case: slaver voyages from Havana had increased from 173 voyages over 1831-35 to 214 voyages over 1836-40.²⁷ The *Venus*, a Baltimore built ship, was one such case that the British found in 1838. In August 1838, she sailed for Brazil under US colours, then switched to the Portuguese flag, and sailed to the African coast. The British concluded there were no legal papers

²⁵ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 56, Lord Palmerston to Stevenson, 10 September 1838 and Stevenson to John Forsyth, 5 November 1838.

²⁶ IUP, vol. 19, Correspondence with Foreign Powers relative to the Slave Trade (hereafter, Class B) [Further Series, 1840], United States, 165 and 169-170, first enclosure in no. 159, H.S. Fox to John Forsyth, 29 October 1839.

²⁷ Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*.

legitimising the transfer, and “in any case, her outward voyage, with equipment for the Slave Trade, was protected by her American character.” By early 1839, Rear Admiral Elliot concluded that the slavers became too sure of themselves. They failed even to have an American on board to take over as captain if stopped, and simply kept one of their crew on hand with a certificate of naturalisation as an American.²⁸ Their main weapons were paperwork to hide under a flag of convenience.²⁹

In response, Britain sent several slavers to the United States to pressure Washington to act. In some cases it worked. For example, the District Court of New York condemned the slaver *Wyoming* on 15 October 1839 for violating US maritime law. But the case against the *Butterfly* was weak and rested on the fact that she had large boilers, and other items, that could be used in both the slave trade and in legitimate commerce. Nevertheless, the judge found that “I am constrained, under this view of the various circumstances connected with the case, to declare that there is strong *prima facie* proof that this vessel was, when arrested, employed in the Slave Trade.” The *Butterfly*’s master, an American, was found guilty of involvement in the slave trade, fined \$2000, and imprisoned for two years.³⁰

Palmerston was pleased with the reaction of the Americans to the bold British actions. He reminded them that under US law ships had to meet several conditions to be legally American. They had to fly the US flag, have a two-thirds American crew, and the captain, first, second and third mates had to be American citizens. If the Americans agreed, the British could use that definition, and the Royal Navy could seize slavers

²⁸ IUP, vol. 19, (Class B) [Further Series, 1840], United States, 165-167, first enclosure in no. 159, H.S. Fox to John Forsyth, 29 October 1839.

²⁹ IUP, vol. 20, Correspondence with Foreign Powers, Not Parties to Conventions Giving Right of Search of Vessels Suspected of the Slave Trade (hereafter, Class D), 110, second enclosure in no. 124, “Copy of a Paper found on the person of the Captain in command of the schooner ‘Catherine,’ when captured by the ‘Dolphin,’ and proved on the trial.”

³⁰ IUP, vol. 20, (Class D), 71, 102-106 and 110-111, first enclosure in no. 85, Thomas Stilwell and Sons to Palmerston, 29 April 1840, no. 121, “Judgement. The United States v. the Schooner ‘Butterfly.’ 13 April 1840,” and James Buchanan to Palmerston, 17 August 1840; and Warren S. Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 38-40.

who raised only the US flag whenever a warship challenged them. But Washington rejected the proposal and by December 1839, Palmerston received a discouraging opinion from the Queen's advocate. Neither the ship nor cargo of the suspected slavers brought into New York could be condemned under US law for participating in the slave trade, only for irregularities in their papers. Consequently, Palmerston ordered the British consul in New York, James Buchanan, "not to take charge of such vessels" in the future.³¹ Palmerston had made his point and refrained from pushing the Americans too far over the issue of slave trade suppression if they were unwilling to co-operate.

American Economic Interest in West Africa

While formal Anglo-American talks stalled, American Ambassador Stevenson continued informal discussions with Palmerston, who still wanted the Americans to suppress the slave trade. British and American discussions are significant because they reveal Washington's desire that US commerce be protected, but their unwillingness to do anything significant about the slave trade because of continued domestic considerations. The British also realised that their naval force interfered with legitimate American commerce, but London exclaimed that there was no choice unless the United States dispatched a naval squadron to the West African coast. Palmerston believed that "great good" could be accomplished if they let British warships inspect suspicious American-flagged vessels.³² While the British no longer sent seized US ships to the United States, the Royal Navy continued to harass US-flagged ships. It was a campaign of irritation, short of war, that caught legitimate trade in the middle, and increased Anglo-American tension.

³¹ IUP, vol. 19, (Class B) [Further Series, 1840], United States, 138, 186 and 189-192, no. 141, third enclosure in no. 162, enclosure in no. 167, and no. 168, Palmerston to H.S. Fox, 3 August 1839, J. Buchanan to B.F. Butler, 4 November 1839, New York *Morning Herald*, 2 December 1839, and Palmerston to James Buchanan, 31 December 1839.

³² NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 88, A. Stevenson to John Forsyth, 29 February 1840.

As harassment continued, pressure increased on Washington to send US warships to Africa to protect growing American trade, in particular that of the Northern States who sought new overseas markets and resources. One such case occurred to the *Edwin*, owned by Farnham and Fry of Salem, Massachusetts, and used by P.J. Farnham and Co. of New York in their West African trade. The company traded cloths, beads, and other items with the natives at Ambriz, North of Angola, in competition with English trading stations.³³ The *Edwin*'s captain told American officials that the *Edwin* sailed from Ambriz with some cargo when, on 22 July 1839, the HM sloop *Columbine* fired on and boarded the vessel. The *Edwin*'s captain reminded the British lieutenant "of his having received and hospitably entertained" him "at the factory of Messr. P.J. Farnham and Co. about a month before" and they were involved in a legal trade. But despite this assurance the British refused to release the *Edwin* until they finished their search and discovered nothing. Palmerston told the American ambassador that the matter would be investigated, but it would help if the Americans sent their own warships to the West African coast to enforce the law.³⁴

Over the early nineteenth century, the growth and potential in American economic interests focussed Northern attention on naval protection for long term economic growth. Consequently, Britain and the United States came to share a common belief that sea power could be used to further the growth of national wealth, although they disagreed over the position of slave trade suppression within this equation. New Englanders, and others with West African interests, pressured Washington to protect and promote American West African endeavours with sea power. The economic opportunities also found sympathies in politicians who later held power over the

³³ IUP, vol. 19, (Class D) [Further Series, 1840], United States, 41, enclosure in no. 72, George W. Slacum to J. Forsyth, 16 October 1839 and George Elliot, 22 July 1839, in George W. Slacum to J. Forsyth, 16 October 1839.

³⁴ IUP, vol. 19, (Class D) [Further Series, 1840], United States, 42-43 and 43-44, enclosure in no. 72, and no. 73, Depositions of James Dayley, Richard Darling, and others, 12 October 1839, in George W. Slacum to J. Forsyth, 16 October 1839 and Palmerston to A. Stevenson, 15 February 1840.

nation's foreign policy. These people, especially Daniel Webster, Secretary of State (1841-1843 and 1850-1852) and Abel P. Upshur, Secretary of the Navy (1841-1843) and later Secretary of State (1843-1844), believed in using sea power to protect and further trade, and compromised with Britain to further these wider goals. The evolution of the American position allowed for a much-anticipated resolution of Anglo-American maritime difficulties along the West African coast.

During this period, the American Northeast, including the Mid-Atlantic States and New England, industrialised and serviced the whole country rather than just the local market. The wool and boot industry, largely based in Massachusetts, grew along with the iron industry, which supplied railway ties, iron stoves, and other consumer products. Douglass C. North concluded that the "surge of expansion that began in 1843 was an era in which the Northeast had ceased being a marginal manufacturing area and could successfully expand into a vast array of industrial goods."³⁵ With increased growth in the American economy in all regions, but in particular the Northeast, trade with other regions increased. West Africa was one such region. Merchants in Liberia, like one Mr. Carey, shipped coffee to Richmond, Virginia; others shipped rice, palm oil, dyewood, and ivory. In turn, Liberian "elites" liked Western goods, like bread, butter, ham, and molasses, and frowned on local produce.³⁶

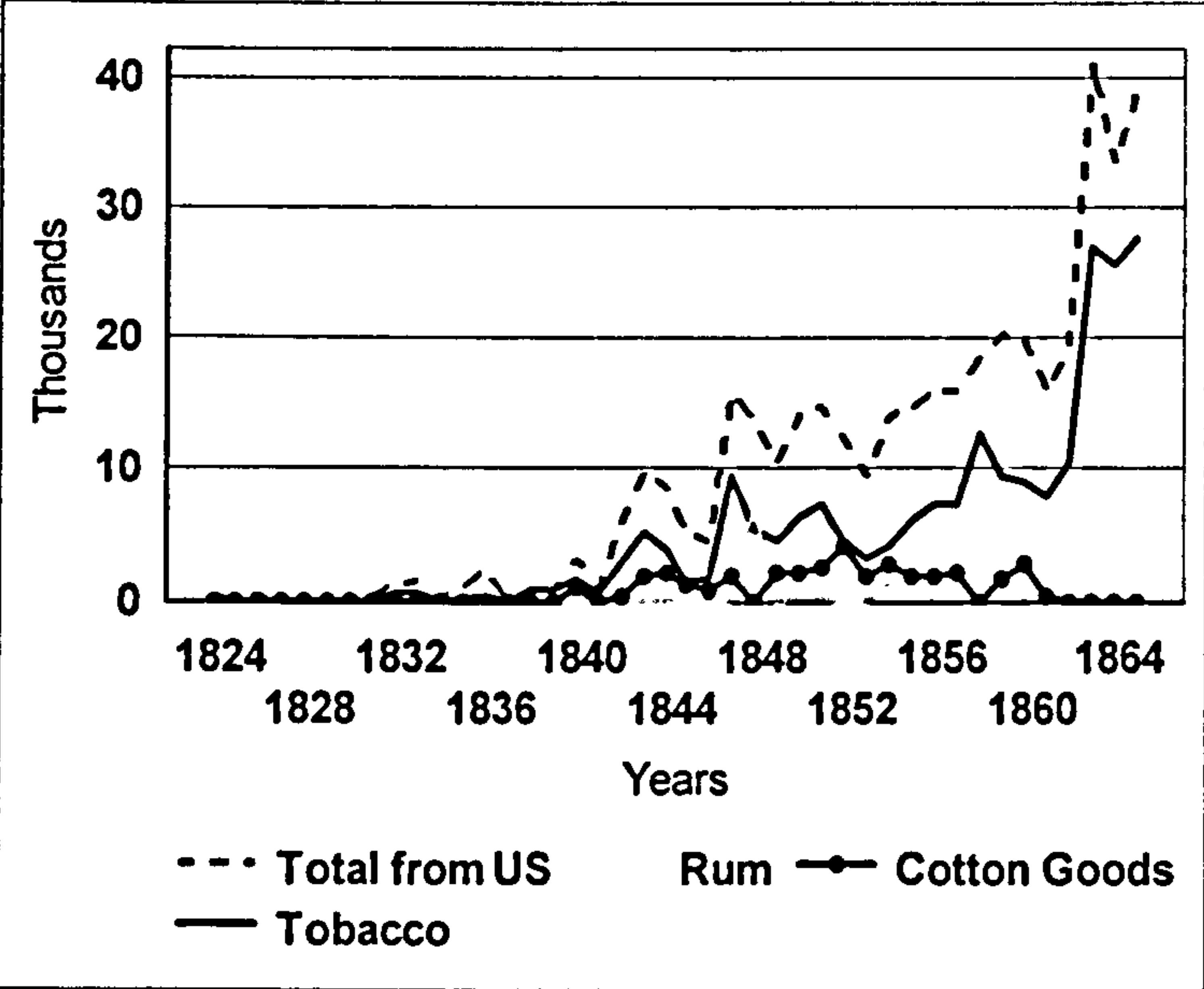
The American African trade was the domain of smaller New England merchants. From 1832 to 1864, there were 558 arrivals from Africa to Salem carrying camwood, palm oil, and other items traded "along the Guinea, Liberian, Ivory and Gold Coasts[.]" Samuel Eliot Morison concluded that West African trades "afforded a good living to many swapping Yankees, who had insufficient capital for the grand routes of commerce."³⁷ African products entered America virtually duty free, never charged a

³⁵ North, *Economic Growth*, 156-176.

³⁶ Beyan, *American Colonization Society*, 116-118.

³⁷ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), 33 and 221-222.

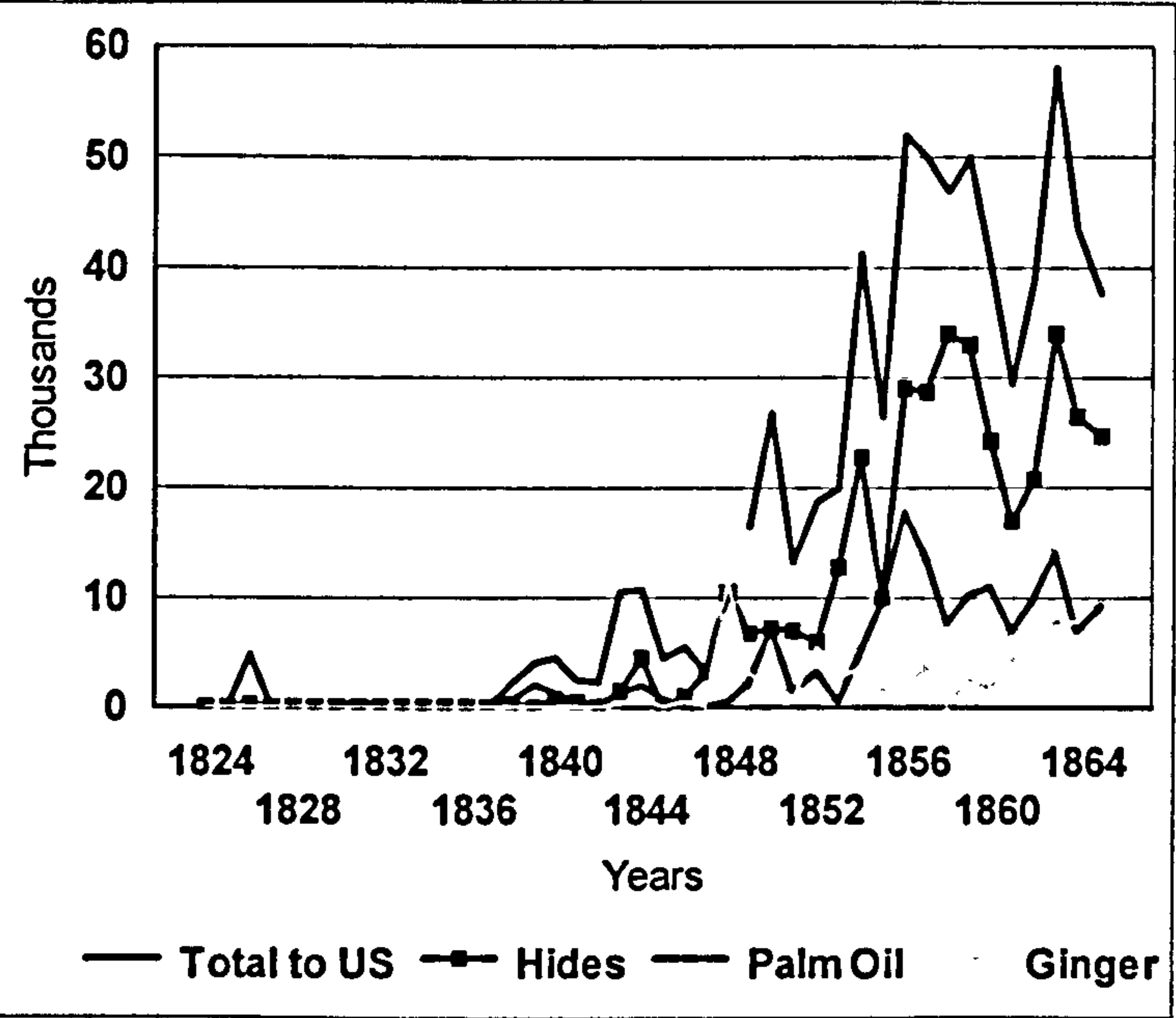
Figure 5.1 US Exports to Sierra Leone, 1824-1865, £ thousands



Source: Calculated from George E. Brooks, Jr., *Yankee Traders Old Coasters & African Middlemen: A History of American Legitimate Trade with West Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston, MA: Boston University Press, 1970), Appendix E, “Value of Sierra Leone Imports, 1824-1885 (in sterling),” 305-306.

Note: Total also includes small amounts of lumber/shingles and flour, omitted from this graph.

Figure 5.2 US Imports from Sierra Leone, 1824-1865, £ thousands



Source: Calculated from Brooks, *Yankee Traders*, Appendix F, “Value of Sierra Leone Exports, 1824-1885 (in sterling),” 307-308.

Note: Gaps in graph represent missing data from Brooks. Total also includes insignificant amounts of peanuts and camwood, omitted from this graph.

duty of more than 10% on most goods. Given these opportunities, American merchants prospered as never before. George E. Brooks, Jr., concluded that these were the golden years for the West African trade.”³⁸

At its peak, American trade to Africa was primarily in rum and tobacco. In return the Americans obtained palm oil, peanuts, ivory, and hides – in particular in demand in New England, for example in Salem’s growing shoe industry. The trades were small and concentrated, which helps explain its absence from official, aggregate statistics, as too insufficient to record. Figure 5.1 indicates that trade with Sierra Leone, for example, began its growth during the mid-1830s; American imports never exceeded £50,000, largely tobacco. Exports to the United States (figure 5.2) were of similar values, never exceeding £50,000 a year, largely hides and palm oil. American trade declined after the 1870s, pushed back by increased competition from monopolistic European trading companies and cheaper goods shipped from Europe by steamers.³⁹ But Washington came under increasing pressure from the North to protect and promote overseas commerce with the navy during the “take-off” phase.

While trade was small, it was growing and important to those Americans with a financial stake in West Africa. Salem merchants such as Robert Brookhouse, Jr., David and Thomas P. Pingree, and Charles Hoffman were involved in the African trades. They wrote the government and pleaded for greater US naval involvement off West Africa. For example, in 1836, Secretary of the Navy, Mahlon Dickerson wrote Stephen C. Phillips, an associate of Charles Hoffman’s⁴⁰, and said that the government supported

³⁸ George E. Brooks, Jr., *Yankee Traders, Olds Coasters & African Middlemen: A History of American Legitimate Trade with West Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston, MA: Boston University Press, 1970), 95-97.

³⁹ Brooks, *Yankee Traders*, 6-7, 97 and 126-129.

⁴⁰ Daniel F. Vickers, historian of maritime Salem, notes that Hoffman, recorded in his database, first voyaged to Africa in 1833. Hoffman worked his way up Salem society, marrying Ruth Felt, whose family was involved in “fisheries and coasting.” After his wife’s death, he remarried in 1840 to Eliza King and was in the “top wealth decile on Salem’s tax lists from 1835 ... until 1850” when the Vickers’ group stopped tracking him (D. Vickers to M.C. Hunter, personal correspondence, 26 April 2002).

US West African interests, but Hoffman wanted more. Hoffman suggested that the navy dispatch a brig or schooner to the coast along with a barge to sail the coast from Sierra Leone to Cape Verde. American trade with Gambia was important to Hoffman and recently trade had liberalised to the benefit of Americans. George Rendell was the colony's governor and was "very friendly to free trade and commerce with Americans[.]"⁴¹

Yet, as discussed in Chapter Two, this was an era of growing freer trade, not free trade. The London firm of Foster & Smith, Hoffman reported, had "waged a war against the trade of the United States" to Gambia and had succeeded in imposing a 6d tariff on American liquor, tea, and other products "except tobacco and lumber." If the London and American firms both had liquor, natives preferred the former. Hoffman believed that the long-term benefits of sea power were clear. The chief cause of restriction of trade on the River Nunez were British factory owners who established their facilities on shore first. Hoffman concluded that these "monopolizing factors" fleeced American profits and British warships convinced local Kings to discriminate against Americans.⁴²

Nevertheless, the pleas of interested Americans languished in Washington. On 6 November 1839, a representative from the "Colonization Rooms," a lobby group, wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, J.K. Paulding, about the slave trade and West African commerce. The representative, whose name is illegible, also concluded that the British had a monopoly on West African trade, and he was suspicious of Buxton's emerging plans for the African coast. The Rooms' author concluded that if the slave trade was suppressed under Buxton's plan, the British would control all the trade along the coast to the detriment of America. Moreover, the show of British naval force had instilled native "respect" for the British. Their ships were left untouched if run ashore, while

⁴¹ NA, RG 45, Letters received relating to African Colonization, Charles Hoffman to Mahlon Dickerson, 26 July 1836.

⁴² NA, RG 45, Letters received relating to African Colonization, Charles Hoffman to Mahlon Dickerson, 26 July 1836.

American ships were often pillaged. Consequently, America must send a naval force to the region and give the ACS more power to build colonies, purchase more land, and establish shore factories for the benefit of American trade.⁴³ Americans feared the trading moves of other powers, in particular Britain, and in mercantilist form worried that they would lose trade to the British unless Washington made a political decision to nurture economic growth with sea power.

Contemporaneous to the growth in US trade were incidents close to American waters that threatened to bring the issue of freedom of the seas and slave trade suppression to a violent climax between the nations. First, the *Amistad* case created problems for American diplomats. Slaves being transported in the vessel along the Cuban coast revolted, but at night the crew secretly made their way toward the United States. By August 1839, the vessel arrived at Long Island, New York, and eventually the US Supreme Court upheld the slaves' freedom; their case presented by John Quincy Adams. It is significant because it showed the futility of the American position and the 1819 US Anti-Slave Trade Act. If illegally captured slaves who found their way to the United States could be declared free, it could open the door for other nations, close to US waters, to free slaves captured by illegal American slavers. Soon thereafter, on the legal coastal slave-trade vessel *Creole*, slaves revolted and took their ship to Nassau, a British possession. The British hung those responsible for killing crewmembers, but released the other slaves as freemen. Southerners cried out that it was yet another example of British interference.⁴⁴

By February 1840, Washington had time to digest Palmerston's continual suggestions, but concluded that it was still politically impossible for Washington to shift its position. Washington reminded London that the earlier 1824 attempt had failed, and

⁴³ NA, RG 45, Letters received relating to African Colonization, [illegible], Colonization Rooms, Washington, DC, to J.K. Paulding, 6 November 1839.

⁴⁴ Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union*, 384-413.

the domestic political situation was no better almost twenty years later. The US State Department wrote that:

[t]he opposition then manifested, and which compelled great caution and reserve in future dealings, with the subject, has, it must be admitted, been strongly fortified by recent events [the *Caroline* incident and Northeast boundary dispute], and especially by the present state of the relations between the different powers who have entered into conventional arrangements upon the subject.⁴⁵

Adams, meanwhile, concluded that Anglo-American relations had reached an impasse over slave trade suppression. He confided to his diary that the slave trade “is with us a forbidden topic.”⁴⁶

Crisis and Opportunity

Rebecca Berens Matzke concluded that during Anglo-American disputes over 1838-1846, Britain used naval power as leverage to pressure America to capitulate. Although dismissing War Office “anxiety” about the US, and the resulting war plans, as simply the “duty of the military experts[,]”⁴⁷ she believed that London, fresh from defeating Ali, was then willing to use similar naval force against the United States.⁴⁸ She offered that the Admiralty planned to bombard American coastal cities, like New York, if Britain failed to get its way.⁴⁹ Divorced from a wider analysis that neither side had the political will for an apocalyptic confrontation, she was perplexed when the Maine-New Brunswick border dispute failed to erupt into war. Britain’s failure to “park warships off the US coast, as it might have done against an underdeveloped nation” were also

⁴⁵ IUP, vol. 19, (Class D) [Further Series, 1840], United States, 56, no. 85, John Forsyth to H.S. Fox, 12 February 1840.

⁴⁶ John Quincy Adams, 21 March 1841, *Memoirs*, vol. 10, 450.

⁴⁷ Rebecca Berens Matzke, “Britain Gets Its Way: Power and Peace in Anglo-American Relations, 1838-1846,” *War in History* 8:1 (2001): 43.

⁴⁸ Matzke, “Britain Gets Its Way,” 25-27.

⁴⁹ Matzke, “Britain Gets Its Way,” 23.

problematic. Matzke concluded that Palmerston hoped the Americans would “give way when in the wrong[,]” but besides tracking intelligence on America, she was unsure of how Britain dealt with the risk that domestic American opinion might accidentally push the nation to war.⁵⁰ Matzke avoided entirely the component of the Webster-Ashburton treaty that provided a mechanism for controlling the very sea power that she believed was the deterrent against America.⁵¹

During 1837 and 1838, a rebellion erupted in Canada against the British. But within the impasse, the *Caroline* crisis and the Northeast boundary dispute offered an opportunity to resolve outstanding Anglo-American issues, including slave trade suppression. The crisis is significant because it revealed how Anglo-American interests and connections overcame their disagreements. The Americans were under pressure to police the slave trade, but also desired to protect and promote legitimate US commerce along the West African coast. In Britain, rather than seek confrontation, new Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, and his Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, sought conciliation with the United States. The result was a compromise. The nations formulated a mechanism, using their navies, which both hoped would end the controversy over slave trade suppression. Both believed that the compromise over the use of sea power in the equatorial Atlantic would be a conduit in their relations and reduce Anglo-American tension. Their navies would cruise together off West Africa to suppress the slave trade to refrain from offending the national sensibilities of either nation.

During the failed Canadian rebellion, the rebels chartered an American ship, the *Caroline*, to transport “passengers” and “supplies” to an island stronghold. The British became aware of the plan, attacked the *Caroline*, and sunk her on the American side of Niagara Falls, a severe violation of American sovereignty. While Washington worked to calm its citizens, the British sent Lord Durham to study the cause of the rebellion,

⁵⁰ Matzke, “Britain Gets Its Way,” 37-40.

⁵¹ Matzke, “Britain Gets Its Way,” 32.

recommending Responsible government. Soon thereafter, a new hot spot flared along the disputed Maine-New Brunswick border. Secretary of State Daniel Webster worked to calm all sides, and after President William Henry Harrison's death, the British accepted liability for the *Caroline* affair. Governmental changes in London also helped.⁵²

Sir Robert Peel, the free trader, in power "briefly" from 1841 to 1846, took the "tread softly" and "big stick" approach with the Americans and wanted a negotiated settlement. The *New York Herald* editorialised that the United States should take the opportunity of the new British government to settle the outstanding issues. Peel forwarded the *Herald's* view to Lord Aberdeen, his new Foreign Secretary. Peel understood how British actions in stopping and searching American-flagged vessels during peacetime might lead to war. He believed that the Royal Navy should take steps to ensure that needless British visits to vessels along the African stopped. To resolve the disputes, Peel and Aberdeen sent Alexander Baring, Lord Ashburton, to the United States. Ashburton owned land in Maine, although not in the disputed region, knew Daniel Webster, had an American wife, and treaty-negotiating powers as a special ambassador.⁵³

Ashburton was also a member of the Baring banking family. As early as 1797, Alexander Baring promoted the benefits of investing in a new, growing country like the United States.⁵⁴ But participating in informal peace talks to end the War of 1812, Baring confessed the rigidity of British maritime doctrine and admitted that London would never abandon the right of impressment.⁵⁵ Still, after the war, he had been president of the Board of Trade from 1834-35, the last time Peel was in power, and was respected by

⁵² Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty*, 19-60.

⁵³ Norman Gash, *Sir Robert Peel: The Life of Sir Robert Peel after 1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1972; revised edition 1986), 498-499.

⁵⁴ Platt, *Foreign Finance*, 163.

⁵⁵ Hickey, *War of 1812*, 284.

many Americans.⁵⁶ His dispatch sent a message that London was concerned about the financial implications of an Anglo-American dispute, but also that Washington should remember where funding for critical aspects of American economic development was raised. Baring Brothers was known as the bankers of the American government, including at some State levels. They also provided financial capital for American expansion, Baring's resources surpassing those of local, American, houses "at least until the 1850s and 1860s."⁵⁷

Platt concluded that financing, like that provided by the Baring Brothers, gave the United States "cheapened credit and it accelerated growth."⁵⁸ Consequently, Bourne concluded that Ashburton "represented pacifying factors of Anglo-American trade which men like Aberdeen and Peel, though not Palmerston, believed was already so much more important than squabbles over frontiers or even national honour."⁵⁹ Therefore, it was in both British and American interests to settle the disputes that had accumulated. The Americans would maintain access to British credit, and the investors the potential to see returns. Aberdeen explained that he thus sent Ashburton with full powers to settle all issues including that of the right of search.⁶⁰ But Aberdeen knew that the Americans would never submit to a mutual right of search treaty, and the request would not be resubmitted.⁶¹ Instead, the nations developed a compromise over the use of sea power that they hoped would mitigate immediate and subsequent Anglo-American tensions.

⁵⁶ Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty*, 95-102.

⁵⁷ Platt, *Foreign Finance*, 144 and 150. See also, this study's Chapter Two, 52-53.

⁵⁸ Platt, *Foreign Finance*, 163.

⁵⁹ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 50.

⁶⁰ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 5, Edward Everett to Daniel Webster, 31 December 1841, with apparent postscripts dated 3 and 4 January 1842.

⁶¹ IUP, vol. 21, Correspondence with Foreign Powers, relating to the Slave Trade, (hereafter, Class D), 1841, 267-269, no. 273, Aberdeen to A. Stevenson, 13 October 1841.

Anglo-American Interests and the Webster-Ashburton Treaty

The change in Washington over 1841-1842 is significant because those in the Executive were willing to use sea power overseas. They were sympathetic to merchants with West African interests and willing to compromise with the British to move their individual commercial policies forward. Previous US administrations, like those of James Monroe and John Quincy Adams, preferred to deploy American sea power reactively against threats like piracy close to home waters. The White House now had a Secretary of the Navy willing to protect and promote American trading interests over the long term with the navy. In December 1841, Secretary of the Navy Abel P. Upshur explained to Congress the navy's role. A stronger navy was needed to patrol the Brazilian and West African coasts to suppress the slave trade and protect American trading rights.⁶² The early 1840s thus coincided with a period of Anglo-American relations that opened the door to the settling of some outstanding issues between the countries and the establishment of a US West African squadron.

Upshur opined that so many nations contested the trade of that region that the nation's navy must be there as a show of force and protection for American businessmen over the long term. But the situation along the West African coast was worse during 1842. Due to the small budget of that year, no vessels patrolled the coast and Upshur reported that American trade had suffered as a result. Natives had also attacked American vessels and murdered the crews. One such case was that of the schooner *Mary Carver*. The navy sent a warship to the area to demand reparations, with little success, and Upshur concluded that American commerce with Africa needed more vessels to patrol the area. He believed that the recent agreement with the British gave the Americans an opportunity to protect American interests on the West Africa coast.⁶³

⁶² United States, *Congressional Globe*, 27th Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, 17-20, Upshur, "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 4 Dec 1841."

⁶³ United States, *Congressional Globe*, 27th Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, 17-20, Upshur, "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 4 Dec 1841" and United States, *Congressional Globe*, 27th Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, 39, Upshur, "Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, December 1842."

The agreement that settled the slave trade suppression issue until the Civil War was negotiated within the milieu of growing American concern for their overseas trade and the political considerations of both governments. The focus of the talks was the boundary dispute between Maine and New Brunswick, but the negotiators formulated a plan for joint naval patrols of the West African coast. The plan meant to allay American fears over the right of search and British concerns over the lack of American slave trade suppression. The arrangement was based partly on the European Quintuple Treaty and a co-operation agreement between Royal Navy and US Navy officers along the West African coast that was earlier disavowed. The result was a compromise that initially met British and American goals.

The Quintuple Treaty

The talks that began in Washington in 1842 were a continuation of the Quintuple Treaty talks of the European powers. The latter treaty laid out rules of engagement for multinational naval forces patrolling the West African coast, to prevent disputes between the great powers. Initiated by the British, in late 1841, Aberdeen convinced the Russians, Prussians, and Austrians to meet in London to discuss a mutual right of search agreement. The treaty, known as the Quintuple Treaty, was finalised in December and the British asked the Americans also to become party. The new American Ambassador, Edward Everett, reported that the British seemed willing to abandon the right to impressment, and limit their anti-slavery activities to the African coast, if the Americans came on side.⁶⁴ Lord Ashburton had discussed the Quintuple Treaty with him and Everett asked Webster if an Anglo-American exchange of notes would be sufficient to seal the deal. The British abandonment of the right of impressment and stopping Americans ships involved in the “coasting” slave trade would relieve “the chief

⁶⁴ Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty*, 74-75.

objections to our joining in the General Agreement.”⁶⁵ Respected Massachusetts maritime jurist Judge Joseph Story also supported the Quintuple Treaty and suggested the United States participate in the plan.⁶⁶

But President John Tyler, who had slaves, disagreed. He was also wary about becoming entangled in agreements with foreign powers, something that went against traditional American foreign policy. In the meantime, the US Ambassador to Paris, and Presidential hopeful, Lewis Cass, stirred discontent by speaking out against the Quintuple Treaty. Perhaps seeking political capital, he professed that the treaty violated America’s freedom of the seas. Probably because of his influence, the French also rejected the treaty, although it was signed by the other powers minus the United States.⁶⁷ Because the Americans rejected it, London pursued a bilateral agreement that addressed specific American concerns. Meanwhile, as will be revealed in Chapter Six, Britain grew wary of the separate French naval presence along the West African coast. The British reaction to maintain watch on their traditional rival would later strengthen American suspicion of London’s true intentions.

Regardless, the Quintuple Treaty was a sound compromise that laid the groundwork for international co-operation to police the slave trade, while respecting the differing opinions of the various parties over the application of “peacetime” sea power. Warships were only permitted to stop a vessel on “reasonable grounds” that it was involved in the slave trade, being equipped for the trade, or having been involved in the trade during its voyage. But the “high contracting parties” were aware of the strategic implications of such a use of sea power, and its potential to cause conflict. Undoubtedly

⁶⁵ Charles M. Wiltse and Harold D. Moser, (eds.), *The Papers of Daniel Webster*, 14 vols. (Hanover, NH: Published for Dartmouth College by the University Press of New England, 1974-1989), Diplomatic Papers, vol. 1, 491-496, Edward Everett to Daniel Webster, 21 January 1842, “Private.” (Hereafter, Daniel Webster Papers, set and volume number).

⁶⁶ Daniel Webster Papers, Diplomatic Papers, vol. 1, 537-538, Joseph Story to Daniel Webster, 19 April 1842.

⁶⁷ Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty*, 74-76 and Daniel Webster Papers, Diplomatic Papers, vol. 1, 717-721, Lewis Cass to Daniel Webster, 3 October 1842, no. 161.

the French, British, Russians, and other regional powers would have objected to such a right on any number of grounds. Therefore, they mitigated its ability to harm their diplomatic relations. The treaty stipulated that the “said mutual right of search shall not be exercised within the Mediterranean Sea.” Finally, naval officers were ordered to co-operate with other naval forces where practicable.⁶⁸

It was in this atmosphere that the Webster-Ashburton talks addressed specific American concerns. Webster was from New Hampshire and a Federalist until the party collapsed, and then he joined the Republicans. Like many Americans, he had been wary of war with the British in 1812 and now as Secretary of State he took a conciliatory approach.⁶⁹ But Webster also wanted to uphold American rights. On 29 January 1842, Webster wrote Everett and recounted the *Creole* Case. Webster explained that the vessel, travelling from port-to-port along the American coast, carried slaves along with other goods. The British had no right to interfere with the vessel to free the slaves, as no British laws were, in Webster’s opinion, broken. Webster asked Everett to bring the government’s position to the attention of London. He also asked for compensation for the vessel based on Lord Palmerston’s opinion of 1837, in the cases of the *Enterprise*, *Encomium*, and *Comet*, that people in legal possession of slaves, who were interfered with in British territories by British “functionaries,” were entitled to compensation. The Secretary noted that it was unreasonable to afford non-British entities a British character and give them “English privileges,” and freedom, in such cases.⁷⁰

The ramifications were clear to Webster: “Would any one [sic] contend that the fact of their [slaves] having been carried into England by force, set them free?” even

⁶⁸ Britain, *BFSP*, vol. 30, 272-291, “Quintuple Treaty.”

⁶⁹ William H. Rehnquist, “Foreword: Daniel Webster and the Oratorical Tradition,” in Kenneth E. Shewmaker, (ed.), *Daniel Webster “The Completest Man”* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1990), ix; Richard N. Current, “Daniel Webster: The Politician,” in Shewmaker, (ed.), *Daniel Webster*, 1-2; and Howard Jones, “Daniel Webster: The Diplomatist,” in Shewmaker, (ed.), *Daniel Webster*, 203-224.

⁷⁰ Daniel Webster Papers, Diplomatic Papers, vol. 1, 177-185, Daniel Webster to Edward Everett, no. 9, 29 January 1842.

though they might be slaves being legally transported on the American coast? Furthermore, he was also concerned that legitimate US coastal trade, near British possessions along Florida and in the Gulf, was threatened. To mitigate Anglo-American tension, Webster proposed a modification to both nations' use of sea power. Webster held the liberal ideal that each country must uphold the "doctrine of non-interference" in each other's trade and "domestic regulations," or world peace "will be always in danger." He hoped that Lord Ashburton's visit would settle the matter.⁷¹ As a compromise, Webster suggested that America and Britain keep separate naval forces on the West African coast. The forces would "act in concert ... in order that no slave ship, under whatever flag she may sail, shall be free from *visitation* and *search* [emphasis in original]."⁷² British and American warships would cruise in pairs. The US Navy would search American-flagged ships and the Royal Navy, those of other nations. The compromise would allow Anglo-American relations to move forward, reduce and prevent tensions, while each nation pursued their wider, and often divergent, objectives.

Tucker-Paine Agreement

The Tucker-Paine Agreement is significant as a barometer of how Anglo-American interests shaped their diplomatic and naval relations. It moulded their use of sea power for "peaceful" purposes; conflict avoidance with each other, while furthering economic goals. Where once divergent interests meant the disavowal of the agreement, now that their interests converged sufficiently, it became the basis for compromise. Webster and Ashburton based the implementation of the joint-cruising proposal on an agreement between Royal Navy Commander William Tucker and US Navy Lieutenant John S. Paine. The agreement was disavowed by the previous US administration, but Webster

⁷¹ Daniel Webster Papers, Diplomatic Papers, vol. 1, 177-185, Daniel Webster to Edward Everett, no. 9, 29 January 1842.

⁷² Daniel Webster Papers, Diplomatic Papers, vol. 1, 543-544, Daniel Webster to Edward Everett, 26 April 1842.

decided to use it as a basis for solving the impasse over the Quintuple Treaty so that the nations would patrol in pairs; “hunt in couples.”⁷³ Ashburton agreed that if the plan was put into the treaty, the issue of the right of search would “settle itself.”⁷⁴

The Tucker-Paine agreement was reached in March 1840. Lieutenant Paine had sailed in the US warship *Grampus* to the West African coast to join the warship *Dolphin*, already there under the command of Lieutenant Charles H. Bell. The *Grampus* was sent on two missions: to protect US “mercantile interests” and ostensibly to stop the abuse of the US flag by slavers. West Africa’s senior Royal Navy officer, Commander William Tucker, proposed to Paine that the two co-operate to suppress the slave trade. They agreed to seize any vessel engaged or thought to be engaged in the slave trade. If it was American, the British would turn it over to the *Grampus*, or another US warship; otherwise, the British would send it for trial under the terms of treaties with other powers.⁷⁵

Lord Palmerston was pleased with the agreement and forwarded related documents to Washington. Meanwhile, it proved successful along the coast. For example, on 3 March 1840, the Royal Navy brig *Bonetta* seized a suspected slaver, the *Sarah Anne* from New Orleans, after receiving information that it was operating in the Rio Pongo. The ship was outfitted for slaving, with a deck being constructed to house the slave children, enough water and food for slaves, and firewood. While the British tried to free the ship from shallow water, gunfire erupted. They returned fire, captured the ship, and the captain of the British warship asked Lieutenant Paine if he could turn the *Sarah Anne* over to him; the latter agreed.⁷⁶

⁷³ IUP, vol. 24, Correspondence with Foreign Powers, not Parties to Conventions, giving right of search of vessels suspected of the Slave Trade, From January 1st to December 31st, 1842 (hereafter, Class D), 202-203, no. 149, Ashburton to Aberdeen, 25 April 1842.

⁷⁴ IUP, vol. 24, (Class D), 203, no. 149, Ashburton to Aberdeen, 25 April 1842.

⁷⁵ IUP, vol. 20, (Class D), 76-77, enclosures in no. 89, William Tucker to Lieutenant Paine, 10 March 1840, J.S. Paine to Commander Tucker, 10 March 1840, and “Agreement,” 11 March 1840.

⁷⁶ IUP, vol. 20, (Class D), 78-80, enclosures in no. 90, John L. Stoll to Lieutenant Paine, 16 March 1840 and J.S. Paine to J.R.L. Stoll, 16 March 1840.

The British made other seizures of US flagged vessels, justified under the terms of the Tucker-Paine agreement, but once the ships were sent to the United States the results were less promising. The courts freed one vessel, the *Tigris*, and her owners were compensated. There was also outrage in Washington over Paine's actions. Navy Secretary J.K. Paulding, originally appointed secretary of the Board of Navy Commissioners by President Madison in April 1815, naturally told Paine that he had exceeded his powers. Under no circumstances were British warships allowed to stop and seize American-flagged vessels, regardless of whether they would be handed to an American warship.⁷⁷ But the Tucker-Paine agreement laid the groundwork for the slave trade suppression provisions of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.

The new administration saw the benefits of using sea power to further long-term goals of promoting commerce and mitigating diplomatic disputes over slave trade suppression. During the negotiations, Webster consulted Bell and Paine about the West African coast. The officers believed that American "fair traders" were "sometimes obstructed" by "armed British merchantmen, sustained by British cruisers." The British merchantmen and naval officers made trade agreements with natives, which secured for the British "the exclusive trade with the tribe or district." Bell and Paine suggested that the Americans make similar treaties, but they "should not be made to the exclusion of other mercantile powers trading on the coast, as has sometimes been done; and all treaties should contain a prohibition of the slave trade." Finally, Bell and Paine believed that Americans and British should co-operate and cruise in pairs.⁷⁸

With the Quintuple Treaty and the Tucker-Paine agreement as terms of reference, the British and Americans agreed to a joint-patrol provision that was placed in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. Word of the finalisation of the treaty reached London

⁷⁷ W. Patrick Strauss, "James Kirke Paulding," in Paolo E. Coletta, (ed.), *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 2 vols. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1980), vol. 1, 165; Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty*, 73 and McNeilly, "United States Navy," 102-103.

⁷⁸ Daniel Webster Papers, Diplomatic Papers, vol. 1, 547-555, Daniel Webster to Charles H. Bell and John S. Paine, 30 April 1842 and Chas H. Bell and Jno S. Paine to Daniel Webster, 10 May 1842.

by September 1842. Everett reported that American press proclamations against some provisions of the boundary settlement “will not be without an influence in recommending them to the favor of the British public.” Everett concluded that the ratification of the treaty would also please the government as a policy success, and allow Britain to free troops from North America for the “Chinese and Afghan wars[.]”⁷⁹

President Tyler agreed with the basic plan, but made some modifications. Tyler clarified the treaty to ensure that it applied only to the African coast, and only to enforce agreements with the American government. Congress and Parliament both approved the treaty, although it had detractors.⁸⁰ Senator Thomas Hart Benton thought an African squadron was too expensive. Then-Congressman James Buchanan believed that the treaty was not reciprocal and the British could do as they pleased. Southerners, meanwhile, were more interested in expanding their cotton market in Britain, although some voiced concerns that the treaty failed to protect slavery. But the historian of the treaty, Jones, concluded that many Senators were tired of talking about the subject and offered few comments. The Senate approved the treaty thirty-nine to nine and the public seemed supportive. In Britain, Palmerston, temporarily out of office, was jealous that someone else had negotiated the treaty. Finally, Lewis Cass, still ambassador to Paris, opposed the treaty, called it “maritime metaphysics,” and questioned whether the British had acquired a right of search or visit.⁸¹ Cass’ opposition is important because when the issue climaxed in the late 1850s, he was Secretary of State under James Buchanan. Yet, Britain and the United States would again modify their sea power policies rather than threaten Anglo-American relations.

⁷⁹ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 21 and no. 24, Edward Everett to Daniel Webster, 1 September 1842 and Edward Everett to Daniel Webster, 19 August 1842.

⁸⁰ Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty*, 143 and 161-176 and Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 88-93.

⁸¹ Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty*, 143 and 161-176 and Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 93-117.

Conclusion

Over the 1830s and early 1840s, British and American leaders believed that sea power could be used to police maritime markets and encourage trade growth in the equatorial Atlantic. But they differed on the priority of slave trade suppression and the right of the British to search American-flagged vessels. During this period, the British maintained pressure on the United States to police the slave trade yet avoided war. London, for example, presented the Americans with cases that showed that the US flag covered the traffic. British pressure went so far as to bring suspicious US vessels to New York. The Americans objected, prosecuted the cases, but the Queen's advocate told Palmerston to curtail his efforts to twist the American hand.

Informal Anglo-American talks resumed in this climate. Meanwhile, the British continued to stop ships they felt illegally flew the US flag along West Africa and interfered "accidentally" with legitimate US commerce, as in the case of the *Edwin* from Salem, Massachusetts. Yet, because of internal American political considerations, the British concluded that pressure on the Americans was futile and London was unwilling to push the issue into war. Instead, the Maine-New Brunswick border dispute, growing US industrialisation in the North, and receptive administrations in London and Washington, opened an opportunity to settle the dispute over the application of peacetime sea power. The Webster-Ashburton agreement marked their commitment to fight the slave trade from the West African side, while reducing tension and preventing conflict that might arise over the immediate, tactical, use of navies.

With an American squadron present, the Royal Navy no longer needed to stop American-flagged ships. The treaty appeased both sides. By 1844, Aberdeen reported that Anglo-American co-operation helped suppression, the number of Royal Navy cruisers along the Brazilian coast would be reduced, and more resources devoted to West Africa. Upshur, now Secretary of State, told Everett that the British could no longer interfere with the US flag: the US Navy protected American commerce and

suppressed the slave trade.⁸² The presence of the US Navy might help British strategy, but legal problems in the United States would curtail American activity against slavers, just as sympathetic US commanders hoped to act. In the end, the US priority was commerce protection and expansion, and the navies rarely cruised in pairs.

Anglo-American naval deployment reveals that the Americans focussed on trade protection and “showing the flag” to further long-term economic growth. In contrast, the Royal Navy combined slave trade suppression and the implementation of free trade. The navies implemented their nations’ policies using sea power, but their strategies differed and affected their naval relations. The reality off West Africa was different from what was hoped for because the nations had different objectives. As differences grew, tensions rose. But their decision to use sea power to further long-term goals peacefully also meant that they were willing to solve their disputes by modifying the uses of their navies in a continual process of accommodation. Sea power provided a mechanism through which the nations related, and furthered their objectives, without going to war.

⁸² NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 164 and no. 168, Edward Everett to John C. Calhoun, 18 July 1844 and Edward Everett to John C. Calhoun, 27 July 1844; and Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 104.

Chapter Six: The Royal Navy and West Africa, 1843-1857

By the 1840s, the Royal Navy was along the West African coast as a British mechanism to further long-term objectives to suppress the slave trade and, short of war, relate with other powers. The Royal Navy was one of the main instruments of British trade policy and, unlike Washington, British humanitarian efforts merged with their trade and strategic policies. At home, the government had to overcome the demands of radical free traders to disband the squadron and allow unfettered commerce, even if slave produced. But the government supported those who felt that only slave trade suppression would encourage legitimate commerce. A unified West African strategy suited the nation's economic and strategic needs and maintained the squadron's presence. Consequently, Royal Navy activities were different from US Navy actions, although both shared the belief that sea power could further long-term goals "peacefully." However, their different strategies created the conditions whereby Anglo-American tension might rise.

In Britain, the elite dominated and secured their objective of using sea power to push African "factors of production" away from the slave trade and into legitimate commerce. The Royal Navy also eagerly signed trade treaties with natives to match similar French activities and counter their traditional rival. The British installed native leaders sympathetic to Britain, as at Lagos in 1851, and enforced agreements with recalcitrant native chiefs. Thus, the British captured 634 slavers, dwarfing the total American effort during the same period.¹ But London also wanted peace maintained with other nation-states and selected naval officers for the West African coast, like Sir Charles Hotham, with a reputation for diplomacy. Nevertheless, British actions reinforced American unease that Britain sought to dominate the coast, while Britain believed that US involvement in the slave trade grew as the trade continued. Mutual suspicion increased Anglo-American tension and created the potential for an Atlantic-

¹ Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*.

wide war, France and America against Britain, a scenario that Britain wished to avoid.

The Abolitionist North and Free Traders

In Britain, there were divergent views on the economics and morality of slavery that the government overcame to move policy forward. In the abolitionists, the government usually found supporters for a West African policy that involved the suppression of the slave trade and the encouragement of legitimate commerce. In contrast, while the free trade movement opened the possibility of developing Africa, radicals believed in strict non-interference, and free trade in goods, no matter how produced. Nothing should interfere with the natural order of things. Nevertheless, the early abolition movement thrived on morality and in areas with low unemployment and a growing economy where one might expect support for slavery to compensate for inflationary pressures with cheap goods. Drescher concluded that abolition was more a “geographic” phenomenon, centred on the industrial masses of Northern England.²

After 1846, and the end of the duty on sugar, British opposition to the Royal Navy’s blockade of the African slave coast increased. Many believed that it was uneconomical and blocked slaves from the West Indies where they could produce cheap sugar. The radical free traders saw it as a contradiction to support free trade in sugar, while contemporaneously limiting the supply of the “labour” that produced it. The campaign to end the naval patrols began with William Hutt in Parliament in 1845. He wanted to encourage the development of African trade, but like many other radical free traders wanted a regulated slave trade. Some, like Jose E. Cliffe, testified before Hutt’s committee studying the issue that Africans were “Natural Slaves” created by God and for the British to stop them went against His will.³

² Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 10-16.

³ Curtin, *Image of Africa*, 443-447 and Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 101-114.

Semmel concluded that the radicals succeeded in repealing the Navigation Acts, and then set their eyes on British naval strategy. They and other liberals believed that Britain's strategy that used force to stop another's trade "was both immoral and opposed to her true interests."⁴ Hutt and his supporters adhered to strict *laissez-faire*. Through the natural course of events, slaves would rebel and overthrow their masters. But supporters of abolition, like the African Institute and Buxton, had a higher ideal and countered that the Royal Navy was needed to suppress the slave trade and protect legitimate commerce. A free black population would till their soil and produce goods for export, rather than be taken to foreign lands.⁵

While Hutt worked to abolish the squadron, the Lords established another committee in 1849 to study the slave trade.⁶ Most witnesses were naval officers, including Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, recently returned from his African command, who believed the squadron should remain. Even so, the most significant witnesses testified about the need for force to suppress the slave trade on economic grounds. With such high profits from slavery, Africans had to be forced to move factors of production into producing legitimate export products. Otherwise, trade would be one way: British goods sold into the slave trade for barter for slaves then brought to countries like Brazil and Cuba. Witnesses concluded that British industry, and tariff collectors, would see little benefit. Slave traders had little compunction about underselling legitimate merchants while bartering for slaves. The elite, symbolised by the Lords, concluded that the only way to further British economic goals was to use sea power to push Africans into legitimate commerce; the government agreed and moulded its naval policy accordingly.

⁴ Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy*, 53-57.

⁵ Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy*, 40-42.

⁶ David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain and the abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 210-214.

The most important testimony came on 5 July 1849, from James MacQueen, the famous geographer. Jeffrey Pardue concluded that MacQueen advocated expanding the “British Empire at a time when it was of little interest to most people in his country.” But MacQueen, from Glasgow, also moved in gentlemanly circles. The Scotsman’s family had no connections, but “[o]ver the years, he did build up a network of influential friends, from powerful West India merchants and banking men, such as John Irving and Lord Ashburton[.]” He accepted “his subordinate position in this hierarchy, which helped define his role as an ‘agent’ for powerful metropolitan interests[.]” In this role, MacQueen acted as the Colonial Bank’s agent, founder of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, and geographic information broker. Pardue explained that the “ties with which MacQueen helped bind the periphery and the metropolis” also “helped centralize power in the metropolis.”⁷

In the emancipation debate, MacQueen, with ten plantations and 1000 slaves, defended West Indian slavery. In the end, he accepted emancipation, but disagreed on its timing.⁸ But he also realised that the West Indian colonies were “on the decline” and he looked toward “Africa for new imperial opportunities.”⁹ In 1821, he advocated expansion in a number of regions, like Fernando Po and the Niger. Later, he forged uneasy alliances with former foes, like Buxton, to further development plans for Africa.¹⁰ As an Africa expert, and moving in elite circles, he was “solicited by the Colonial Office to be its agent for the Niger Expedition of 1841” although he did not take the position. But Pardue remarked that “his constant promotion of Africa, in the hopes of ‘selling’ the public and the government on the continent’s potential to Britain, was much like an agent’s.” MacQueen was an intermediary, another tool, that the elite

⁷ Jeffrey David Pardue. “Agent of Imperial Change: James MacQueen and the British Empire, 1778-1870” (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 1996), 1-5 and 18.

⁸ Pardue, “James MacQueen,” 100-102 and 106-108.

⁹ Pardue, “James MacQueen,” 61, 84 and 96.

¹⁰ Pardue, “James MacQueen,” 222-223.

called upon to support their case, even if MacQueen disagreed with policy decisions, such as slave trade suppression.¹¹ He believed that the African squadron was a waste of money, but conceded that if the government was intent on the task, half-hearted measures were insufficient. African factors of production had to be pushed away from the slave trade to create a level field for legitimate commerce.

MacQueen hoped to encourage African agricultural development and offered a strong explanation of the current dynamic of the African economy.¹² British merchants benefited from increased commerce, the side effect of a growing slave trade, as their products entered the slave-trade cycle.¹³ If the squadron was withdrawn, British exporters might see their trade increase “tenfold.” But MacQueen admitted that because the slaver’s profits were made in places like Brazil, they had no problem “undersell[ing] the legal trader” so long as slaves were obtained in return.¹⁴ Quantity sold might increase, but the value of products would stagnate. Furthermore, if a legitimate British merchant went to the African coast for palm oil, he would encounter British produce having already fallen into the slave trade economy and African workers traded to foreigners. It had a detrimental impact on the palm oil industry; ironically, MacQueen opined, palm oil production only increased if “domestic slaves increase.”¹⁵

MacQueen explained that Africa was capable of producing “to an unbounded extent” legitimate products, especially cotton. The only thing preventing such expansion was “the disturbance which the Slave Trade everywhere creates.”¹⁶ It competed for factors of production that were needed to generate a favourable balance of trade

¹¹ Pardue, “James MacQueen,” 2-3, and 224.

¹² Curtin, *Image of Africa*, 428-431.

¹³ Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, House of Commons, 1850, Vol. IX, “Reports from Committees: Eleven Volumes. African Slave Trade. Session 31 January – 15 August 1850. Vol. IX,” (hereafter Lords Committee), 262.

¹⁴ Lords Committee, 265-267.

¹⁵ Lords Committee, 263.

¹⁶ Lords Committee, 267-268.

between Africa and Britain. If the goal of the gentlemanly capitalists, and others, was to increase commerce between Britain and Africa, it had to flow both ways to benefit Britain domestically, increase the value of trade, and hence government revenue and City financiers. Of those involved in the African trades, MacQueen confirmed, they had supporters in Parliament. A number were Liverpool firms, including Horsfall's, Jackson's, and Tobin, plus Matthew Forster of London. When prompted by the committee, MacQueen noted that Jackson and Forster were MPs.¹⁷

Others also offered testimony that slave trade suppression benefited commerce. On 18 June 1849, Robert Stokes, involved with African affairs since 1800, testified that imports from West Africa to Britain over 1783-1787, never exceeded £90,500 and British exports to the region never exceeded £50,000 annually.¹⁸ But after the ban on the slave trade, he professed that imports to Britain from Africa had risen to £535,577 and exports from Britain to £693,911 by 1810.¹⁹ The rise in palm oil was the most dramatic component of the trade, increasing from 2,599 cwts. in 1790 to 414,570 cwts. by 1846. The increasing commerce provided governments with more revenue. The Customs House on the Gold Coast, in 1839, 1840, and 1841, collected "32,687 l. 4s. 0½d." at a tariff rate of about 3%, "indicating the value of the importations in those three years to have been upwards of a million sterling[.]" Stokes found equivalent values for exports and for trade at Gambia.²⁰

Ralph Dawson, was involved in the Africa trades from 1827 to 1839 with the merchant house of Wilson and Clegg. He told the committee on 22 June 1849, that he used three ships that could load upward of 1,000 tons of palm oil. But Liverpool houses dominated because of the port's history with the slave trade; Africans looked upon

¹⁷ Lords Committee, 273.

¹⁸ Lords Committee, 191.

¹⁹ Lords Committee, 192.

²⁰ Lords Committee, 192.

vessels from London or Bristol with scepticism.²¹ He concluded that natives had no incentive to shift their factors of production into legitimate commerce. The Committee asked, “Might not machinery be introduced with advantage into the palm-oil trade supposing Europeans were to go out there, and set up mills, would not he be able to make a great profit?” Dawson replied, “I think not; the climate is so much against it.” Local production factors were needed, and they were scarce if devoted to the more profitable slave trade.²² The slave trade provided some profits to British merchants, but it would expand dramatically, some testified, if only the slave trade was suppressed. But in the end, the radicals who wanted to end slave trade suppression, lacked the power and influence to overcome the cohesive group of merchants, abolitionists, and the gentlemanly capitalist elite, who wanted suppression to continue.

The Lords concluded that the slave trade prevented the growth of legitimate African commerce. They believed, for example, that “[c]otton and almost all tropical productions might, it appears, be largely produced in Africa if this one master impediment [the slave trade] were removed[.]” The Lords recommended that “the cost of the Squadron should be set against the advantage of nourishing and maintaining a valuable and increasing lawful trade, which must be utterly extirpated if the Cruisers were withdrawn, and which might be developed to an unlimited extent if the Slave Trade were suppressed.” The opportunity cost of withdrawing the squadron was clear to the elite. Rather than disband it, the squadron should be improved.²³ Moreover, wider parliamentary opinion supported the Lords when the issue finally came to a vote.

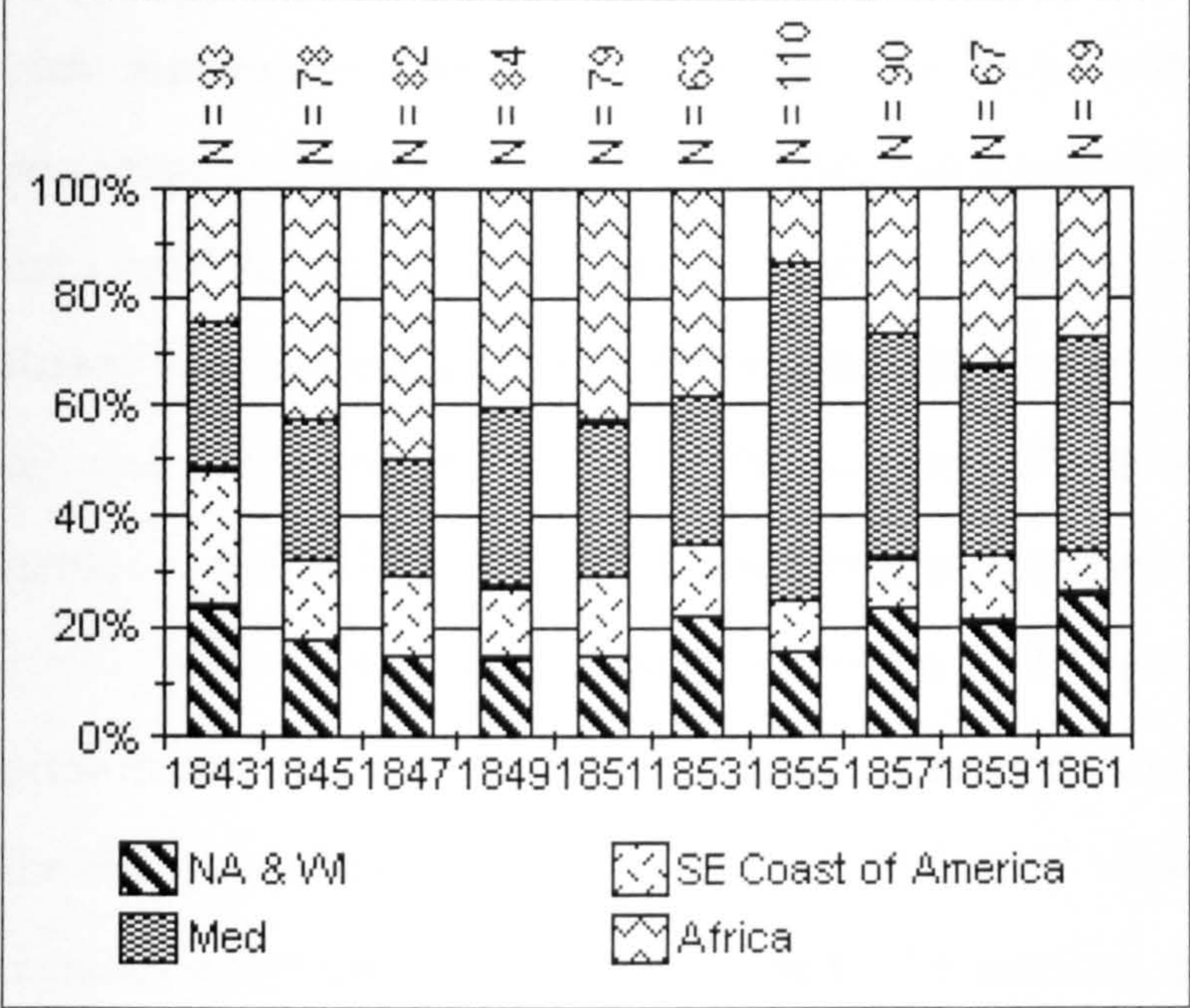
Cain and Hopkins explained that the land-owning, military and financial classes dominated the economic interests of MPs at mid-century, especially conservative members. The latter class, the authors established, had aristocratic roots; averse to

²¹ Lords Committee, 211-217.

²² Lords Committee, 218-219.

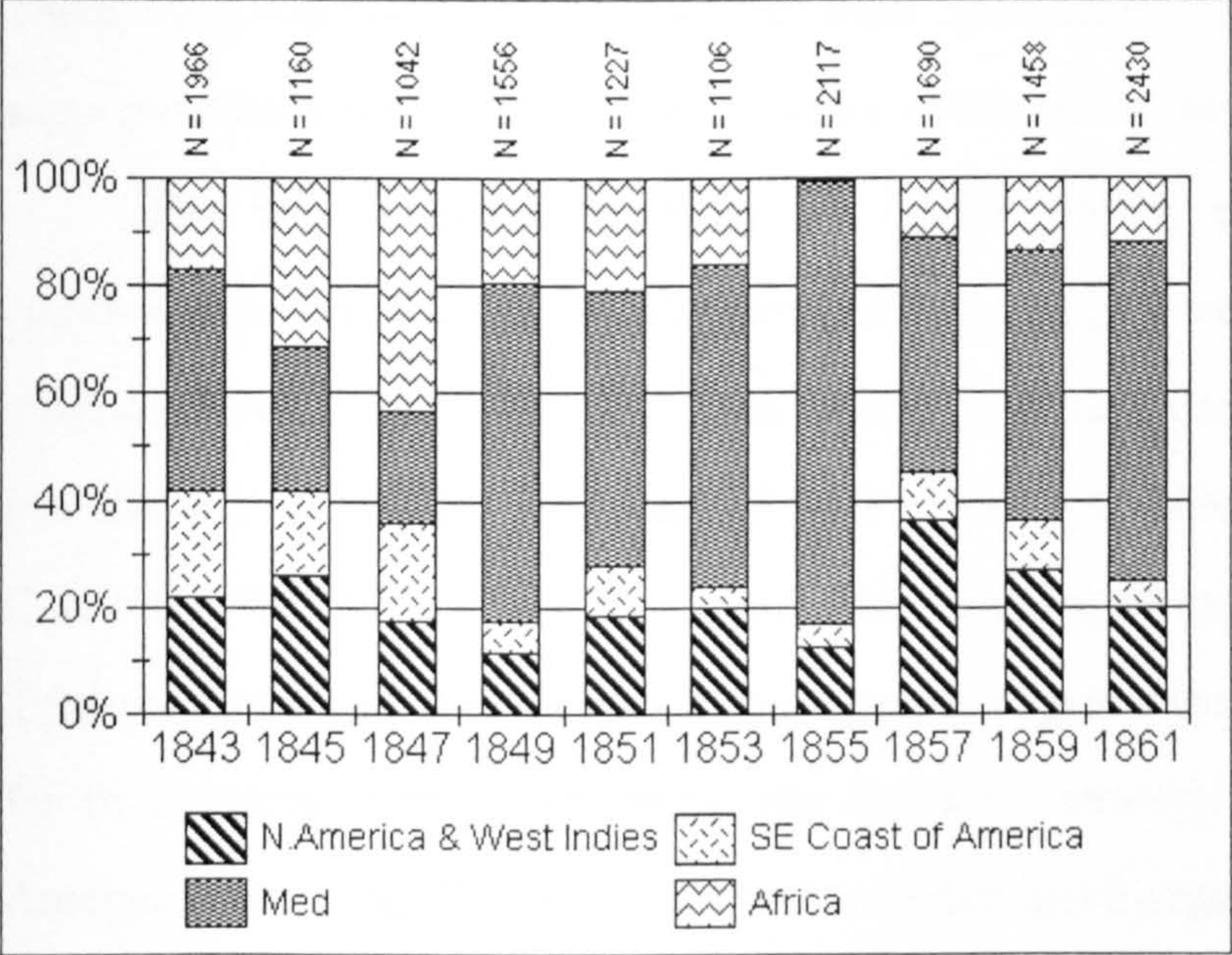
²³ Lords Committee, 590-592.

Figure 6.1 Royal Navy Vessel Deployment Atlantic, 1843-1861



Source: Calculated from PRO, Navy List, 1843-1861.
Note: For this period steam ships were also present, but only armed ships, or tugs attached to other vessels, and thus able to contribute to force projection, were counted. NA = North America; WI = West Indies; SE = Southeast; Med = Mediterranean.

Figure 6.2 Royal Navy Armament Deployed, 1843-1861



Source: Calculated from PRO, Navy List, 1843-1861.
Note: For this period, only armed steamships or steam tugs attached to other vessels, and thus able to contribute to force projection, were counted. For 1855, there were 6 guns deployed to Africa, but the small number is obscured in the figure by the overwhelming number of guns deployed to the Mediterranean. N = North; SE = Southeast; Med = Mediterranean.

making money with their hands they preferred investments.²⁴ The economics of slave trade suppression were clear to the elite; only the presence of the Royal Navy would encourage legitimate commerce and substantial economic growth. While Hutt rejected the Lords' report in Parliament on 19 March 1850, Whig Prime Minister Lord John Russell rose to the squadron's defence, made the issue a confidence vote, and the House rejected Hutt's motion to disband the squadron 232 to 154.²⁵ The Royal Navy was needed to further British economic and strategic objectives for the region.

With support in London for the nexus of British goals, the station's strength grew during the 1840s and 1850s. Figure 6.1 reveals that British naval commitment to the coast rose from 23 vessels in 1843, to peak at 41 vessels over 1847-53. Figure 6.2 signifies a corresponding pattern for the total armaments deployed on British warships along the coast. Although the Mediterranean maintained its strategic importance, especially during the Crimean War, as indicated by its majority in guns deployed, in terms of number of warships, Africa became the largest station in the Atlantic theatre. There, the Royal Navy implemented free trade agreements to further British commerce, suppressed the slave trade, and kept watch on other nations, like France.

But with a liberal mentality for foreign policy, the government selected commodores, like Sir Charles Hotham, that they hoped would maintain peace and mitigate disputes. Force was only used on rare occasions, and against non-nation-state powers, like to install a new ruler of Lagos more sympathetic to British objectives. Conflicts with other nations were avoided. London hoped that the Webster-Ashburton Treaty would enable Anglo-American co-operation against the slave trade and would go far in furthering British objectives. But London's strategy raised suspicion on the American side as the British seemed to consolidate and increase their dominance of the

²⁴ For example, in 1868, 45.9% of conservative MPs had landowning interests, but only 26.1% of liberals (Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 132).

²⁵ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 112-113 and Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 214.

West African coast. The conflicting goals of the Royal and US navies increased Anglo-American tensions and had to be relieved.

Royal Navy Operations, Slavers, and Free Trade

Against the background of competing interests over West Africa and slave trade suppression, the government maintained its commitment to slave trade suppression and the nation's strategic needs. While slave trade suppression and border disputes were settled, London feared that France and America would unite against Britain. Aberdeen held out the hope that he could sever Franco-American friendship by allying with France to guarantee Texan independence. But British relations with France soured when the latter began activities in North Africa, and attacked Morocco in 1844, while their relations in other regions also deteriorated. Again, Aberdeen turned to the United States, and settled the Oregon boundary dispute.²⁶ The British remained wary of global French intentions. Along West Africa, this meant that Britain maintained a check on French moves through the presence of the Royal Navy. The navy was tasked with implementing trade treaties with natives to counter similar French actions. But London also selected commodores they hoped would keep Anglo-French relations from spiralling out of control. Nevertheless, the side effect of overall British strategy reinforced US suspicions of British motives.

British attitude toward the French varied with its monarchical or republican leanings. London maintained a balance of power strategy, but it was a careful doctrine meant to contain France without sparking war or a Franco-American alliance. Along West Africa, the primary French settlements were Senegal and Gorée, but policy formulation in France against the slave trade was more difficult than in Britain. Kielstra has shown that French abolitionists lacked the power and influence of their British counterparts. French abolitionist goals failed to form a nexus with the wider political

²⁶ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 54-55.

and economic powers: “Colonists, merchants and manufacturers called it [the slave trade] a life-line; nationalists, a reaffirmation of French power.” After the wars, French “merchants, colonists and nationalists looked to” the rival of the slave trade to “restore fortunes devastated by a quarter-century of war.”²⁷ Co-operation with Britain was impossible. When France rejected the Quintuple Treaty, they instead dispatched their own naval force to the West African coast.²⁸

While tensions with other nations remained high, Britain hoped to contain, rather than exacerbate them. By 1848, revolutions in Europe spread from Italy, to France, and to Austria, and removed Louis Philippe and Metternich in the process. Only Russia, Britain, and Belgium were spared turmoil. In response, Britain and Russia hoped to “preserve the Balance of Power, and especially to contain revolutionary France.”²⁹ In London, Palmerston was concerned about the new French Republic, but believed that “the Powers should not stimulate republican aggression by taking too strong a line.” He reiterated Britain’s non-interference policy and declared London would recognise newly established regimes.³⁰ In the end, Palmerston worked to prevent French dominance and interference in the revolutions in the other countries, to varying degrees of success. But Bourne concluded that “he was always careful in 1848-49 to put Britain’s interests and the preservation of the Balance of Power first.”³¹

Palmerston confirmed his foreign policy philosophy before Parliament in March 1848. He declared that his goal was to maintain peace and friendly relations with other countries, so long as it was in Britain’s interests. The government had sought to extend

²⁷ Paul Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 16-17 and 21.

²⁸ Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, 120-121.

²⁹ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 63.

³⁰ Broadlands MSS., GC/WE no. 189, reprint in Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, Doc., 48, Extract from Palmerston’s private letter to Lord Westmorland (Minister in Berlin), 29 February 1848.

³¹ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 68.

and protect British commercial endeavours and provide them with security. While countries may work together, he concluded that “it is our duty to make allowance for the different manner in which they may” implement their policies, even if they differed with British goals, for Britain wanted the same. But, he exclaimed, “I would adopt the expression of Canning, and say that with every British Minister the interests of England ought to be the shibboleth of his policy.”³² British goals and strategy were clear and are reflected in how London and her naval and diplomatic representatives dealt with other nation-states that operated along the West African coast. Consequently, London would check the French presence along the coast, but realised that open conflict with Western nations, like France and the United States, had to be avoided.

Sir Charles Hotham, French Relations, and Deterrence in West Africa

British strategy to counter the French along Africa had ramifications for the entire equatorial Atlantic. Anglo-French relations could drag the region into a war and the British could face a war on “two fronts” with France and the United States as they had in 1812.³³ Therefore, London implemented a sea power policy to maintain peace on the African coast. Gough concluded that the Royal Navy linked “the metropole to its peripheries” in both economic and military policy. Station commanders “answered to the Lords of the Admiralty, who in turn took their cue from the Cabinet and invariably the Secretary of States for Foreign Affairs.”³⁴ The command of Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, from 1846 to 1849, best illustrates this nexus for West Africa. Hotham had to suppress the slave trade, but London also wanted the squadron to monitor carefully French moves while the squadron advanced British economic and strategic objectives.

³² Britain, *Hansard*, 3rd series, xcvi, 121-123, reprint in Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, Doc. 49, Extract from Palmerston’s reply to his critics in the House of Commons, 1 March 1848.

³³ Hamilton, *Anglo-French Naval Rivalry*, 13.

³⁴ Gough, “Profit and Power,” 75.

London ordered Hotham to counter French activities that threatened to give them a foothold in Africa that might threatened British interests. For this purpose, Hotham signed treaties with natives for slave trade suppression and the furtherance of free trade. London meant the treaties to counter similar French activities without sparking war. With uncertainty in Europe, London was fearful that any conflict might spread across the ocean and involve the United States. Meanwhile, Hotham also sought to show that the squadron effectively suppressed the slave trade, to counter opposition from radicals in Parliament. But overall British strategy reinforced American suspicions that London sought to drive other nations from avenues of growing commerce, rekindling Anglo-American tension.

Hotham had a reputation for balancing strategic and diplomatic imperatives, and London concluded he was ideal for the West African command. He was a member of the gentlemanly elite, a member of the Yorkshire landholding Hotham family. After the typical time spent as a young officer, Hotham was appointed to command the steamship *Gorgon* in 1842. By December, they sortied to the Plata region, unstable following the wars of independence. After a war with Brazil over the Banda Oriental, Britain worked to maintain peace in the region and helped Plata and Brazil reach an agreement that Uruguay would remain independent. But “the sovereignty of Uruguay remained in dispute for another forty years.”³⁵

When Hotham arrived, the ports of Montevideo, Uruguay’s capital, and Buenos Aires, were in such rivalry that the Buenos Aires navy had blockaded Montevideo. Meanwhile, the army of Manuel Oribe, the deposed President of Uruguay, laid siege to Montevideo and threatened American, French and British citizens. Shirley Roberts concluded that the Royal Navy had to balance protecting British subjects, furthering the nation’s commercial interests, while avoiding becoming embroiled in the local disputes.

³⁵ Shirley Roberts, *Charles Hotham: A Biography* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1985), 35-39.

Hotham took the position that he should remain neutral while he tried to reconcile the “conflicting interests” of various parties.³⁶

But a dictator, Juan Manuel Rosas, was in power in the Republic, he waged almost constant war on the nations around him, and the turmoil threatened to drag in foreign countries to protect their citizens.³⁷ The French and British decided to wait Oribe out, but Montevideo looked about to collapse, and Oribe’s threat to attack thousands of French and British citizens looked to be realised. Meanwhile, Rosas’ blockaded the Parana River, an important “communication and trade route for inland centres in Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.” If Rosas succeeded, it would have terminated all trade in the region. The British and French decided to act to end the threat. Hotham was in charge of the British side and worked with his French counterpart, proving his ability to balance British strategic needs and international relations in a highly contested region. They secured the Parana River and broke the blockade at Obligado. The re-opening of the Parana River was met with applause in Britain. But diplomats were more pleased that it marked renewed friendship between Britain and France.³⁸

Hotham’s sister, Anne Barlow, concluded that London was eager to exploit the opportunity. Therefore, she wrote, “the Admiralty were extremely anxious *he* [Hotham; emphasis in original] should take it [the African command], as it was at that moment of great consequence to have peace with France, and they thought him most acceptable to the French on account” of their successful co-operation along the South American coast.³⁹ Roberts noted that Captain Joseph Denman already had experience along the

³⁶ Roberts, *Charles Hotham*, 39-41.

³⁷ Roberts, *Charles Hotham*, 50-53.

³⁸ Roberts, *Charles Hotham*, 53-61.

³⁹ Britain, University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library, Archives and Special Collections, Hotham Family Papers, (hereafter, BJL Archives and collection number), DD110 10/47, Sir Charles Hotham, biographical notebook by Mrs. Anne Barlow.

African coast, “was dedicated to the anti-slavery cause” and had a slaver-catching strategy of close blockade of suspected slaver ports. But London’s support for him dissolved when “the Government was obliged to provide his legal defence and to accept responsibility for his actions” when he destroyed Portuguese trading facilities and freed slaves at Gallinas in 1841. When the Admiralty sought to replace Commodore L.T. Jones, they looked to Hotham, who had the “discretion and diplomatic ability, to avoid international and legal wrangles[.]”⁴⁰

Matzke wrote that in March 1846, Lord Ellenborough believed that “the Royal Navy must be capable of crushing the US Navy within six months of the start of hostilities to prevent France from declaring war.”⁴¹ But while prepared for the worst, Ellenborough and other British policy makers hoped to prevent relations in the Atlantic from spiralling into conflict. Hotham received his appointment from Ellenborough on 20 May 1846 and Ellenborough wrote that no other officer “could be entrusted who would carry out the very delicate and difficult duties ... with judgement and discretion, or with more cordial cooperation in the part of our allies the French.”⁴² George Eden, Lord Auckland, was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, served in several Whig ministries, and replaced Ellenborough as First Lord of the Admiralty with Lord John Russell’s rise to office in 1846.⁴³ Auckland was preoccupied with parliamentary discussion over disbanding the squadron, and was concerned about revolutionary France, slave trade suppression and trade promotion.

The Royal Navy was meant to counter French designs that might threatened a route to India during this period of unpredictability. But the British adhered to a pragmatic liberalism: further their slave trade objectives, but contain potential conflicts.

⁴⁰ Roberts, *Charles Hotham*, 64-76. See also, Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 92-100.

⁴¹ Matzke, “Britain Gets Its Way,” 36.

⁴² BJL Archives, DDHO 10/1, Sir Charles Hotham, General Correspondence, Lord Ellenborough to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 20 May 1846.

⁴³ *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Eden, George, Earl of Auckland.”

In Auckland's first letters to Hotham he told him to remain vigilant, exercise "very sound discretion," and keep him informed about the French squadron. Auckland warned that "the keenness of appetite for gain is too great to give you any certainty of mercy."⁴⁴ Furthermore, Liverpool merchants pressed Auckland to increase naval protection along the coast; with the French navy there, French "traders have advantages in consequence." But Auckland doubted the reports and reminded Hotham that collecting "debts" on the part of merchants was beyond the squadron's mandate.⁴⁵

When the revolutions began engulfing Europe in 1848, and threatened the integrity of the British realm, London feared a general war in the Atlantic. In February 1848, Auckland told Hotham to honour the integrity of the British flag, but to be cautious with the French.⁴⁶ Lord Dundas, at the Board of Admiralty and MP for Greenwich, was more explicit in his concerns. He feared that Revolutionary France might be involved in intrigues, in particular in Ireland, that might "plunge us into war." Therefore, the African squadron must also guard against the French in West Africa. Consequently, Dundas believed that the calls in Parliament to abolish or reduce the African squadron were unwise.⁴⁷ British naval policy for the West African coast must be interpreted in this light. The squadron's activities reflected London's hope to counter French moves, while furthering British objectives without sparking a general war.

Hotham was aware of the strategic importance of the African coast, in particular during periods of crisis. In a secret dispatch to Auckland in March 1848, he remarked that the possession of St. Helena, for example, "would give them [the French] the

⁴⁴ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/2, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Auckland, Lord Auckland to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 9 and 10 August 1846.

⁴⁵ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/2, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Auckland, Lord Auckland to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 23 August and 24 September 1847.

⁴⁶ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/2, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Auckland, Lord Auckland to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 24 February 1848.

⁴⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Dundas, Sir James Whitley" and BJL Archives, DDHO 10/3, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Dundas, Lord Dundas to Charles Hotham, 30 July 1848.

command of our Indian Trade and be a capital coal depot for their steamers[.]” Given the French proclivity for the *guerre de course*, Hotham concluded that they made “no secret of their intention to avoid [direct] combat, & destroy in every possible way our trade[.]”⁴⁸ But he concluded that the British West African squadron had little to fear from the French “unless by an accident a shot is exchange[d.]”⁴⁹ Hotham believed that French officers were “too much occupied with the late events” to concern themselves with the British.⁵⁰ The situation was tense, Hotham and London were wary, but they hoped to match French moves while keeping relations from degenerating.

The African squadron provided deterrence, but the British were keen to prevent the spread of any conflict across the entire Atlantic. As early as December 1847, London asked Hotham if he had considered plans for war with France. Auckland believed that the African squadron was adequate and “you would [be] able to clear the African seas of the French flag[.]”⁵¹ But as the 1848 revolutionary crisis deepened, Hotham, for example, took the French fleet seriously and feared the ramifications across the entire Atlantic if war erupted. He noted that “the subject of greatest anxiety . . . will probably be the attitude assumed by the United States.” If Britain adhered to the right of search during war, it would undoubtedly draw the United States into the conflict. Therefore, he believed that Britain should be prepared to strike and defeat the United States first to “leave us comparatively disengaged and able to cope with more formidable enemies” rather than fight a two-front war.⁵²

⁴⁸ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/11, Sir Charles Hotham, Secret Letter Book, Charles Hotham to Lord Auckland, 21 March 1848.

⁴⁹ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/11, Sir Charles Hotham, Secret Letter Book, Charles Hotham to Admiral Dundas, c. June/July 1848.

⁵⁰ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/11, Sir Charles Hotham, Secret Letter Book, Charles Hotham to Hamilton, August 1848 and Charles Hotham to Lord Auckland, undated, c. September 1848.

⁵¹ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/2, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Auckland, Lord Auckland to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 20 December 1847.

⁵² BJL Archives, DDHO 10/11, Sir Charles Hotham, Secret Letter Book, Charles Hotham, “Memorandum drawn up by order of the 1st Lord of the Admiralty,” 24 November 1848.

Free Trade Treaties and Deterrence

The historiography of slave trade suppression has concluded that the treaties that Britain signed with native African rulers was to further economic or slave trade policy.⁵³ But in reality, London also meant it as a subtle way for the navy to neutralise the French threat without sparking war. In November 1846, Hotham confided to Captain Brisbane that the Admiralty warned that the French were active in “obtaining Commercial Treaties on different parts of the coast.” Hotham concluded that the Royal Navy had neglected undertaking a similar task because officers “considered themselves tied by the tenor of the slave instructions[.]” But, consistent with Auckland’s orders, Hotham now ordered Brisbane to investigate French activities. If they had signed commercial treaties with natives, then he was to “collect an imposing force and use all your endeavours” to do the same. Nevertheless, Hotham warned that “I need hardly add that transactions of this character require the strictest secrecy combined with prudence and caution[.]”⁵⁴

Hotham further explained the strategic importance of the treaties to Alexander Murray, captain of the *Favourite*, who became the primary treaty-making commander. The French were obligated to keep a force along the coast for slave trade suppression, but were “eager to turn the powerful force ... to advantage[.]” British treaties with natives would help contain France. The French, Hotham explained, had signed nine treaties with natives, and it sowed “the seeds for future commercial advantages[.]” Even so, in this era of peace, the British could not stop the French moves with war. But Hotham exclaimed that “we can neutralize [sic] their schemes by a similar course of action, and it is here that I require your services[.]” He ordered Murray to cruise the coast, collect intelligence about the French, then gather an “imposing force” and convince the natives to sign treaties with the British. Ideally, Hotham wrote, the treaty should include provisions for slave trade suppression, but at minimum it should be the

⁵³ For example, see Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 88-89.

⁵⁴ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/8, Sir Charles Hotham, Letter Book, Charles Hotham to Captain Brisbane, 16 November 1846.

same as one signed with the French.⁵⁵ Hotham believed that the French would immediately be jealous once they discovered British countermoves. Consequently, he told Auckland of the cautious way in which he proceeded: "I shall be careful to insert the clause reserving equal power to both countries – I shall avoid making a mystery where no real occasion exists."⁵⁶ The treaties were to counter the French; the free trade provisions to maintain a balance of power and ensure that jealousies were mitigated.

Royal Navy treaty-making efforts were the most significant aspect of their work. They reveal how, in this era, the Royal Navy was an instrument of foreign policy and provided a mechanism through which Britain could relate with other nation-states and avoid war. In the beginning, the British signed treaties with African powers along the East African coast, for example Zanzibar and Muscat. By 1838, the Foreign Office suggested that they extend the practice to West Africa and the duty fell upon the Royal Navy. At first the treaties called for the end of the slave trade; respect for British property; permission to trade with anyone along the African coast; and most-favoured-nation status for Britain. But David Eltis concluded that "[t]hese were sweeping provisions that reflected the broader cultural goals of British policy." The Africans were reluctant to agree with the British terms, and London had to settle for only most-favoured-nation status and anti-slave trade provisions in the treaties.⁵⁷ West Africa marked a different approach in British naval deployment philosophy: in the Gulf of Mexico they were concerned with securing exclusive economic advantages, and the Royal Navy played only a policing role.

By 1848, Hotham reported that his squadron was doing all it could to help British merchants along the coast. While the government had adopted a free and

⁵⁵ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/8, Sir Charles Hotham, Letter Book, Charles Hotham to Captain A. Murray, HMS *Favourite*, 25 November 1846.

⁵⁶ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/8, Sir Charles Hotham, Letter Book, Charles Hotham to the Earl of Auckland, 13 February 1847.

⁵⁷ Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 88.

peaceful trade policy, he discovered that merchants had a cut-throat philosophy and “expect a man-of-war to come in and fight their battles.” Nevertheless, while Murray cruised and signed treaties, Hotham believed that the Royal Navy’s presence, like that of the US Navy, helped maintain peace and “friendly relations” with the natives. He concluded that Britain should continue operating in a quiet and peaceful manner to promote legitimate trade with the Africans.⁵⁸

Treaties signed between the Royal Navy and natives over the spring of 1847 provide a significant indication of how British goals formed a nexus. The treaties adhered to a format issued by London, intent on shifting African production factors into legitimate commerce, while they also met Britain’s strategic needs. On paper, the treaties intended to end the slave trade in coastal and river regions with the co-operation of natives. Where the natives lacked the power to suppress the trade, Britain obtained permission to do it on their behalf. For example, in January and February, the British signed a treaty with the chiefs of Manna, in the Gallinas region. Hotham was pleased that the chiefs had approached him about a treaty. They wished to “alter the character of the trade of their country, and substitute palm-oil for slaves.” As planned, they agreed “to show no favour and give no privilege to ships and traders of other countries which they do not show to those of England.”⁵⁹ By May 1848, the British had signed twelve more treaties with African chiefs. Furthermore, Britain signed treaties with native groups that Murray admitted never even had domestic slavery; the treaty-making effort was part of British trade and strategic efforts. For example, the treaty with Sherbro was

⁵⁸ IUP, vol. 36, Correspondence with British Commissioners and other representatives abroad and with Foreign Ministers in England together with reports from the Admiralty relative to the Slave Trade (hereafter, Class A and B), 248, no. 182, Chas. Hotham to Secretary of the Admiralty, 14 March 1848; IUP, vol. 34, Correspondence with British Commissioners and Foreign Powers Together with Proceedings of Vice-Admiralty Courts and reports from Naval Officers relative to the Slave Trade (hereafter, Class A and C), 293, no. 261, Charles Hotham to Secretary of the Admiralty, 11 February 1847; and IUP, vol. 36, (Class A and B), 247-248, no. 182, Chas. Hotham to Secretary of the Admiralty, 14 March 1848.

⁵⁹ IUP, vol. 34, (Class A and C), 300-305, no. 266, Commodore Sir Charles Hotham to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 3 May 1847, with treaty enclosures, and 291-293, no. 290 and enclosure 2 in no. 290, Chas. Hotham to Secretary of the Admiralty, no. 260, 11 February 1847 and “Agreement with the Chief of Manna.”

significant because Sierra Leone carried on timber trade and the Sherbro chief was “about to open the forests on the River Kazamanca”⁶⁰

The British had met some of their goals. The treaties numbered forty-five by 1857, and provided the Royal Navy with the justification needed to go ashore and destroy slave establishments if the treaties were not upheld.⁶¹ On 16 March 1847, for example, Murray met with the chiefs at Cape Mount and presented them with evidence that the property of Theodore Canot still carried on the slave trade and they agreed to destroy the facilities. The British also used their show of force to persuade Africans to sign treaties. For example, in July 1849, Commander Hugh Dunlop and eighty-six men of the Second West India Regiment met with natives to restore peace to the region around Sherbro. But Dunlop told Commodore Arthur Fanshawe that “care has been taken to secure the commercial interests of the colony [Sierra Leone] by clauses inserted [in the peace agreements] for the protection of British subjects and trade.”⁶²

Countering the Radical Free Traders

Kenneth Bourne concluded that the drive for treaties might have started as a way to reduce naval commitments to the African coast.⁶³ But the purpose of the West African squadron was to protect British interest from French intrigue, while being cautious to prevent any dispute from drawing France and American together. Fearing overt confrontation with the French, the government justified its presence to parliamentary committees, calling for its termination, in terms of slave trade suppression and

⁶⁰ IUP, vol. 36, (Class A and B), 251-265 and 296-298, no. 187 and no. 227, Chas. Hotham to Secretary of the Admiralty, 3 May 1848 with treaty enclosures and observations from Commander Alexander Murray and Chas. Hotham to Secretary of the Admiralty, 10 January 1849 and enclosure 2.

⁶¹ Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 89.

⁶² IUP, vol. 34, (Class A and C), 308, no. 268, “Minute of a meeting with the Chiefs of Cape Mount,” 16 March 1847 and enclosure 3; and IUP, vol. 37, Correspondence with British Commissioners and other representatives abroad and with Foreign Ministers in England together with reports from the Admiralty relative to the Slave Trade (hereafter, Class A and B), 275-277, no. 190 and enclosure 1 in no. 190, Commander Hugh Dunlop to Commodore Fanshawe, 16 July 1849.

⁶³ Bourne, *Palmerston*, 622 and Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, 202.

commercial advancement. In 1847, Lord Auckland told Hotham that people at home were beginning to question the point of the squadron, given the cost in money and life.⁶⁴ But Auckland concluded that they were mistaken in their objections. He told Hotham that “the withdrawal of your squadron would throw back all those seeds of civilisation and of legitimate commerce which may yet thrive under your protection[.]”⁶⁵

Auckland opined that discussions in Parliament were fraught with “partisanship and exaggeration[.]” The goal of British sea power had to be clear in the wake of the criticisms. Auckland wrote, “if not for the suppression of the slave trade, [then] at least for the protection of British commercial interests & the maintenance of [the] treaties with the African chiefs” the squadron must remain in force.⁶⁶ He concluded that British commerce with the region was increasing and “[t]he merchants, some of whom are now crying out and ready to censure whatever is done by our cruisers, would be the first and loudest to complain if they were withdrawn[.]”⁶⁷ Hotham agreed, was against any legalisation of the slave trade, and believed that only total suppression would further British goals. Otherwise, slavers would undersell Britons in either legitimate trade or the slave trade. Besides, Hotham countered, “we are not such losers as he [Hutt and others] would imagine ... every article sold on the coast is manufactured in England[.]”⁶⁸

To counter criticisms, on 19 July 1848, Hotham filed a specific comparison of Royal Navy activities over a four-year period. For a 21-month period, from 1 April 1844 to 31 December 1845, under Commodore Jones’ command, the squadron captured

⁶⁴ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/2, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Auckland, Lord Auckland to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 13 March 1847.

⁶⁵ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/2, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Auckland, Lord Auckland to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 30 December 1847.

⁶⁶ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/2, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Auckland, Lord Auckland to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 12 June 1848.

⁶⁷ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/2, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Auckland, Auckland to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 6 October 1848.

⁶⁸ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/8, Sir Charles Hotham, Letter Book, Charles Hotham to Earl of Auckland, 5 December 1847.

96 slavers and freed 5965 slaves. During the same length of time, from 14 October 1845 to 13 July 1848, under Hotham, they captured 131 slavers and freed 11,214 slaves.⁶⁹ Later, Hotham testified before the committees in support of the maintenance of the squadron. He too believed that it was impossible to suppress the slave trade along the entire length of the coast. But he believed that if the squadron was withdrawn, the slave trade would increase as more people entered the business. Furthermore, he concluded that piracy would also grow and it would drive legitimate merchants from the coast entirely.⁷⁰ Only the presence of the Royal Navy and force against natives would advance British goals.

Enforcing British Goals

Historians have worked from the “whiggish” assumption that British African activity was a prelude to the scramble for Africa late in the century. Lloyd wrote, for example, that the “story of the annexation of Lagos shows how slowly, and almost accidentally, the British began to embark on a policy which ultimately gained for her those possessions in Africa[.]”⁷¹ But British actions were part of an overall strategy for the coast. Only Britain enforced combined free trade and slave trade treaties with West African natives to advance wider objectives. London also appointed consuls to the African coast, like John Beecroft, to impress upon Africans the benefits of increased trade. The Royal Navy launched military strikes, with the co-operation of sympathetic native allies, to enforce British policies, as with the attack on Lagos (1851). Where in the Gulf of Mexico Downing Street feared naval action would hurt its trade policies, here London enforced its new informal free trade empire with sea power, installing new rulers with whom the gentlemanly English capitalist could deal. But the significance of

⁶⁹ IUP, vol. 36, (Class A and B), 275, no. 200 and enclosure in no. 200, Chas. Hotham to Secretary of the Admiralty, 19 July 1848.

⁷⁰ Roberts, *Charles Hotham*, 80-82.

⁷¹ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 149.

London's enforcement activities is that they only undertook them against lesser, weak, native powers where forceful encounters could further British objectives without widening a conflict to the entire Atlantic. When Britain blockaded or attacked native powers, they ensured that they notified their nominal allies along the coast, such as the United States.

London's consuls for the West African coast were representatives of the elite and, with the navy, used force against natives to further British objectives by installing allies with whom they could deal. For example, on 30 June 1849, Palmerston appointed John Beecroft as the British consular agent for the Bights of Benin and Biafra. Palmerston instructed Beecroft to prevent any disputes between natives and British vessels that stopped in regional ports. Palmerston hoped that it would encourage growth of legitimate trade to displace the slave trade. In the spirit of freer trade, he told Beecroft to "impress upon the minds" of native leaders the benefits of trading with Americans and Europeans. In the meantime, to further gentlemanly objectives, Beecroft was to gather intelligence about coastal and interior commerce and note what "European commodities" were most desired.⁷² British policies were linked: the freer trade mentality; promotion of legitimate British commerce; and the suppression of the slave trade with naval support to maintain influence in Africa to counter that of France. It neutralised other powers without sparking war, while advancing British interests.

Downing Street firmly articulated British policy in a 15 November 1850 memo. In marked contrast to its earlier policy toward Central America, Downing Street wanted other European powers assured that Britain wanted all nations placed on an equal footing in West Africa. Palmerston believed that commerce was the best method to bring "civilisation" to Africa. The nexus with the freer trade philosophy was clear: "there is room enough in the West & populous countries of Africa for the commerce of

⁷² PRO, FO 84/775, Africa (West Coast): Consular, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Beecroft, 1849, Palmerston to Beecroft, no. 1, 30 June 1849.

all civilized nations[.]”⁷³ Consequently, the British undertook efforts to enforce treaties, but rarely attacked any extensive part of the African coast, with the exception of Lagos in 1851, where British goals met continual resistance.

Since April 1850, Palmerston, through his African representatives, had tried to “induce” the Chief of Lagos to sign a treaty. The navy had blockaded the Whydah region West of Lagos, the major slave port. The slave trade then moved to the next best location, the region of creeks and lagoons that stretched about 150 miles around Lagos. Palmerston told Beecroft that a treaty with Lagos would help end the slave trade along the entire African coast North of the equator. He ordered the consul, in concert with Commodore Fanshawe, to undertake steps necessary to convince the Chief of Lagos to sign an enclosed a copy of the treaty. It bound him to suppress the slave trade and make laws forbidding anyone within his territory from conducting the trade, including any Europeans or other citizens. It also gave the Royal Navy policing powers over Lagos territory and if any slaves were ready for sale, they would be freed into British colonies. The last two articles of the treaty governed free trade and included an offer to the French to be party to the agreement. Palmerston told Beecroft to tell the natives that legitimate commerce was more important than the slave trade, and to warn them that if “the Chief should show a disposition to refuse compliance, you should beg him to remember that Lagos is near to the sea, and that on the sea are the ships and the cannon of England[.]”⁷⁴

Still, talks with Lagos languished and by September 1851, Palmerston lost his patience. The government ordered a blockade of the Dahomey coast until that chief signed an agreement, but Palmerston had other plans for Lagos. The British would

⁷³ Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, 112-113; Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, 193-201; PRO, FO 2/4, Africa: (West Coast). Consuls Beecroft Fraser Consular Domestic. January to December 1850, Herman Merivale to Addington, 15 November 1850 and P[almerston] 20/12 50, Memo, with Herman Merivale to Addington, 15 November 1850.

⁷⁴ Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, 205; Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, 1852, vol. LIV, 309 and 311-312, Palmerston to Consul Beecroft, no. 23, 20 February 1851, with treaty enclosure and Palmerston to Consul Beecroft, no. 25, 21 February 1851.

reinstall the previous chief, Akitoye, whom slavers had removed after he planned to sign a treaty with the British. Palmerston concluded that if the slave trade was expunged from Lagos, then it and the nearby river would become a haven for legitimate trade: “instead of being a den of barbarism, [it] would be a diffusing centre of civilization.” Consequently, on 14 October, the Admiralty ordered Commodore Henry Bruce to blockade the coast and attack Lagos in a manner of “your discretion and judgement.”⁷⁵

A British force, along with Beecroft, assembled and tried again to negotiate with the Chief of Lagos, but talks failed and the British attacked. They opened fire with “shrapnel shell and round-shot” and the HMS *Niger* fired shells as the boats stayed out of the range of the shore. Lord Granville, Palmerston’s replacement, told Beecroft that he had acted inappropriately and failed to warn the Chief of Lagos about the consequences if he failed to capitulate.⁷⁶ But events had overtaken the slow communications along the coast and with London. On 30 November 1851, boats from the sloop HMS *Harlequin* and the steamer HMS *Volcano* destroyed slaving stations, and other vessels. Then, on 17 December, Commodore Bruce told Beecroft that he had orders from London to attack Lagos and put Akitoye on the throne.⁷⁷

The attack began on 26 December, under heavy opposing gunfire, and ended on Sunday, 28 December. A chief from a nearby village came to the British and told him that Lagos was evacuated and the British were victorious. By 1 January 1852, the newly installed King Akitoye met with Bruce on the HMS *Penelope* and signed the treaty. It is unclear if the British attacks on Lagos had any impact on the opinions of the King of Dahomey, but the blockade of that region probably induced him to a friendlier

⁷⁵ Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, 1852, vol. LIV, 361-362, Palmerston to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, no. 43, 27 February 1851 and 138, Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to Commodore Bruce, 14 October 1851.

⁷⁶ Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, 1852, vol. LIV, 375-376 and 393-395, Commander L.G. Heath to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 17 December 1851, enclosure 1 in W.A.B. Hamilton to Lord Stanley of Alderley, no. 56, 7 January 1852, Earl Granville to Consul Beecroft, no. 64, 24 January 1852.

⁷⁷ Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, 1852, vol. LIV, 413-416, John Beecroft to Viscount Palmerston, no. 69, 3 January 1852.

disposition. By late December 1851, British representatives reported his change of heart and treaty signing ceremonies were arranged. Granville was now pleased given the satisfactory outcome and the treaty with Lagos.⁷⁸ In the end, the rulers of Lagos proved weak and by 1861, the British formally annexed Lagos, although parliamentary debate over keeping the limited British possessions continued.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Martin Lynn opines that Britain had little power along the West African coast; the attack on Lagos was the power of the “Man on the Spot,” Beecroft. Lynn speculated that “questions of policy played a very minor role in the actual seizure of Lagos itself” although he agreed that Palmerston had linked slave trade suppression and British economic expansion. It was after unsuccessful talks with Dahomey, Lynn professes, that Beecroft, in a 22 July 1850 memo, advocated a more forceful approach before hearing of Palmerston’s approval. But it is unreasonable to assume that the West African policy adopted by London was solely the result of Beecroft. Lynn admits the consul was a poorly educated and arrogant negotiator who was “clearly ill at ease in his relations with his superiors in Whitehall.”⁸⁰ Instead, it is logical to surmise that Beecroft anticipated Palmerston’s wishes, representing the “gentlemanly capitalist” goals for the West African coast. Beecroft was part of the system of gentlemanly “‘decision-makers’ who ran the imperial government from Whitehall and the ‘men on the spot’ who administered the possessions overseas – both the mandarins and the guardians of empire.”⁸¹ With the navy, Beecroft helped install rulers sympathetic to British goals.

⁷⁸ Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, 1852, vol. LIV, 413-418 and 434-436, John Beecroft to Viscount Palmerston, no. 69, 3 January 1852, with treaty enclosure, Secretary of the Admiralty, J. Parker, to Mr. Addington, no. 73, 17 February 1852, with enclosures, and Granville to Consul Beecroft, no. 75, 23 February 1852.

⁷⁹ Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, 219.

⁸⁰ Martin Lynn, “Consul and Kings: British Policy, ‘the Man on the Spot,’ and the Seizure of Lagos, 1851,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 10:2 (1982): 150-167.

⁸¹ Raymond E. Dumett, “Exploring the Cain/Hopkins Paradigm: Issues for Debate, Critique and Topics for New Research,” in Dumett, (ed.), *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism*, 9.

While the British undertook forceful actions against natives, the Royal Navy was careful to advise Western nations, like the United States, of impending forceful actions, to prevent misunderstandings. Under pressure at home to show results, and with an increase in the slave trade from the Gallinas region, Hotham authorised an attack on 3 and 4 February 1849.⁸² During the attack, they destroyed slave factories at Solyman and Gallinas. But Hotham explicitly told vessels under his command to refrain from interfering with other nations' warships, and merchant vessels were to be informed of the blockade and stopped. Distinct from the American position, Hotham declared that as "the trade of Gallinas has been proved to be connected with slave exportations, and the goods imported used for that sole purpose, you will make no difference between vessels of any nation loaded with any description of cargo."⁸³

The right of blockade was one factor in Anglo-American tension before the War of 1812. Americans believed that blockading powers had to give neutrals proper notice of a blockade, and have a sufficient force to enforce it. Donald R. Hickey wrote that "[t]hese were the principles that the British recognized in theory but did not always follow in practice."⁸⁴ But off West Africa, Hotham took steps to notify the Americans of the blockade. He asked his American counterpart to alert all "American Citizens trading on the West Coast of Africa." Meanwhile, Commander Alexander Murray, HMS *Favorite*, noted that Hotham had instituted a blockade with "sufficient and effective force on the territory of Gallinas" and told the Americans that the blockade extended from 11°35" West to 11°45" West. Consequently, US Commodore Benjamin Cooper recognised the blockade and told Washington that he had directed his vessels to respect

⁸² Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 100-101 and 120.

⁸³ IUP, vol. 36, (Class A and B), 298-299, no. 228 and enclosure 1 and 2 in no. 228, Chas. Hotham to Secretary of the Admiralty, 10 February 1849, "Orders issued by Commodore Sir Charles Hotham," 3 [misdated as 8 February] February 1849, and Chas. Hotham to the Commodore of the French Squadron, 4 February 1849.

⁸⁴ Hickey, *War of 1812*, 12.

it “agreeable to the laws of nations.”⁸⁵ The British used sea powers to further their goals and assured that other powers were aware of Britain’s “peaceful” intentions toward them; a courtesy that was respected.

Increase in the Slave Trade

Whether from naval actions and treaties, or the laws of supply and demand, to the British, their policy appeared at first to be successful. In the wake of sugar duty reform, the slave trade increased, as more slave were needed in Cuba. But slave trade scholars conclude that the slave trade from West Africa declined after 1850, corresponding with the renewed British commitment to suppression off West Africa. But after 1853-54, the slave trade again rose after the death of 16,000 slaves in Cuba from cholera, and renewed demand for slaves on sugar plantations (see figure 6.3).⁸⁶

Figure 6.3 Slaves Embarked and Disembarked, 1841-1865



Source: Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*.
Note: The period 1866-1870 was not plotted because the slaves embarked totalled only 858, while those disembarked totalled 700.

⁸⁵ NA, RG 45, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanding Officers of Squadrons (“Squadron Letters”), vol. 107, African Squadron, (hereafter Squadron Letters, volume, squadron name), Chas. Hotham to Commodore Bolton, 4 February 1849, Alex Murray to Commodore Cooper, 7 February 1849, and Benj. Cooper to J.Y. Mason, 7 February 1849.

⁸⁶ Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 208 and Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 138.

Consequently, by late 1856 and early 1857, the British concluded that the only major demand and destination for slaves must be to the United States, and indirectly through Cuba. The Americans, London believed, must be the only ones standing in the way of the successful implementation of British policy. The British and Americans had different objectives that once more caused Anglo-American tension to rise despite the Webster-Ashburton Treaty and the care Britain took in implementing naval policy along West Africa.

Legal and political conditions in the United States in the mid-1850s contributed to the increased use of the US flag in the slave trade. American courts had placed limits on who could be held responsible for the voyage, and the types of incriminating evidence. In the US political climate, no political party thought to introduce legislation to tighten the law and “[o]nly with the end of the slave trade did the decisions of the Southern New York district cease to harass law enforcement officers.”⁸⁷ By 1855, those with a vested economic interest in the South and slavery called for the repeal of anti-slave trade laws and international commitments to slave trade suppression. Each year the Southern States, for example, held the Southern Commercial Convention and passed resolutions against slave trade suppression and the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. There was building momentum against the continued suppression of the slave trade. A similar backlash against slave trade suppression gripped Congress.⁸⁸

Under these conditions, Britain concluded that three American ports dominated the traffic and were responsible for British difficulties. Vessels from New York and Baltimore often sailed directly to the African coast, while those from New Orleans sailed first to the Canary Islands with flour and there gathered information about slave markets. In New York, Spanish and Portuguese slavers, like one J.A. Machado, became naturalised American citizens with the accompanying protective rights. Machado had

⁸⁷ Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 155-159 and 167-169.

⁸⁸ Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, 169-175.

operated legitimate activities in Gambia and Sierra Leone, while in Whydah and surrounding ports he was involved in the slave trade and legitimate commerce. J.V. Crawford, acting British consul at Havana, also believed that the Americans were to blame. Over 1857 and 1858, he tabulated that one Norwegian, one Peruvian, seven Spanish, and fifty American-flagged vessels had sailed from Cuba for the trade.⁸⁹

Vessel sales and slaver operations hid easily in New York amongst the legitimate vessels. For example, Figaniere, Reis & Co. on 81 Front Street was a front company for slavers; in Havana suspicion arose whenever a US vessel was sold. Slaver operations from New York, by 1857, also coincided with an increase in slave demand caused by increased agriculture in the United States and Cuba. A depression in 1857 also added incentive for slaving voyages and for American shipbuilders to sell vessels into the trade. Slavers outfitted from New Orleans during the spring of 1857, but they moved their operations to Havana after one vessel was seized.⁹⁰ By spring 1857, the increased slaver activities echoed along the West African coast and harmed Anglo-American relations.

A variety of British sources, connected to gentlemanly capitalist, ranging from the Foreign Office to its consuls, the Admiralty and its officers, over 1857 and 1858 blamed the Americans for the continued slave trade. The warship *Alecto*, at the Congo on 14 December 1856, for example, encountered the American vessel *Ellen*. The British boarded the ship, inspected her papers, and discovered she was from New York. But the master refused to open his hatches, and having no evidence to detain the ship, the British released her. In April 1857, meanwhile, Commodore John Adams told London that one of his officers visited Palma and found the “great and increasing trade in palm oil” had replaced its slave trade. Still, the only remaining problem was the Americans.

⁸⁹ PRO, Adm 123/164, B. Campbell, Consul, Lagos, to Commodore Wise, HMS Vesuvius, 16 November 1857; and PRO, Adm 123/177, J.V. Crawford, acting British consul, Havana, to Lord Malmesbury, 3 September 1858.

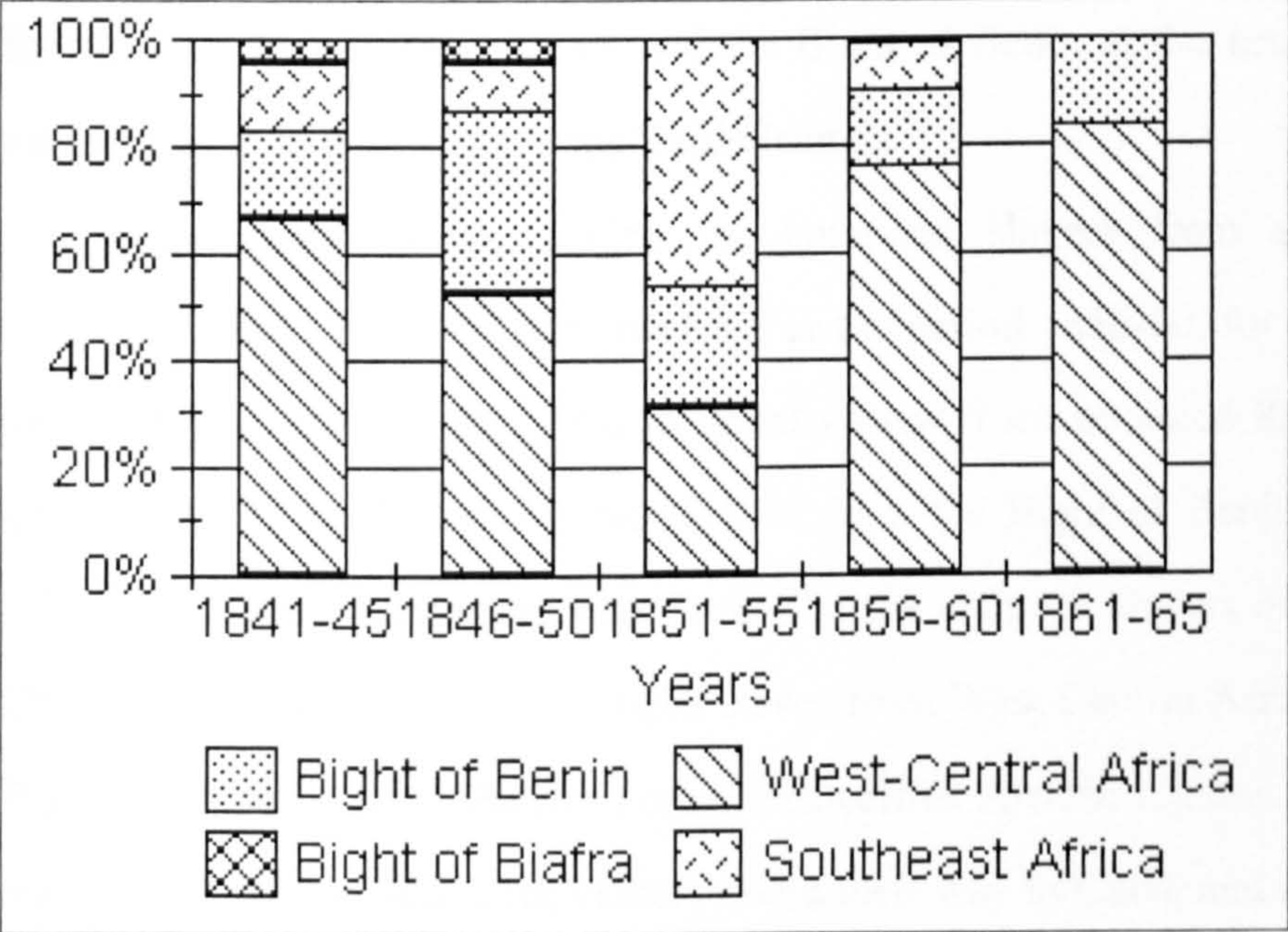
⁹⁰ Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 50-59.

Table 6.1 Slaver Port of Origins

Year	New York	New Orleans	Baltimore	Havana	Other	Total
1841-45	0	2	0	41	598	641
1846-50	1	0	0	3	714	718
1851-55	11	1	0	10	105	127
1856-60	30	18	1	42	145	236
1861-65	10	1	0	15	88	114
1866-70	0	0	0	0	3	3

Source: Eltis, et al. *Slave Trade: A Database*.

Figure 6.4 Relative Origins of Slaves, 1841-1865



Source: Calculated from Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*.

Note: Percentage calculated less unspecified regions. Total percentage also includes other regions that were of such small percentages that they failed to appear on the graph and were thus omitted.

He blamed the lack of American warships on parts of the coast, and hoped that London would convince Washington to do more.⁹¹

The pattern is generally confirmed by *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (1999). Table 6.1 reveals that the number of slavers from New York and New Orleans had increased over 1856-60 from the previous five-year period. Slave trade statistics also reveal that the trade was becoming extinct in some areas, but remained in others. Figure 6.4 shows that the Bight of Biafra and Southeast Africa (including the Cape of Good Hope) declined as a relative source of slaves from 1851-55 compared with later periods. From 1856 onwards, the slave trade was primarily focussed in West-Central Africa and the Bight of Benin at the limit of the American patrol from their base at the Cape Verde Islands.⁹²

Moreover, the destination of American slavers from suspect ports was concentrated in similar African locales. For the period 1856-60, for example, the thirty vessels whose port of origin was originally New York obtained 82.5% of their 9878 slaves from West-Central Africa; 10.10% from the Bight of Benin; and 7.44% from other unspecified African regions. Similarly, the eighteen slavers originally from New Orleans obtained 80.3% of their 6202 slaves from West-Central Africa; 6.88% from the Bight of Benin; and 12.9% from other unspecified African regions. About 70% of the slaves obtained by New York vessels found their way to Cuba, and about 60% of those obtained by New Orleans vessels were landed at Cuba.⁹³

⁹¹ Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, 1857-58, vol. LXI, 117-118, no. 151, no. 152, and enclosures 2, 3, and 1 in no. 152, John Adams to Secretary of the Admiralty, 18 April 1857, John Adams to Secretary of the Admiralty, 1 May 1857, Commander Hunt to Commander Hickley, 15 January 1857 and Commander Hickley to Commodore Adams, 17 February 1857.

⁹² Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*. Eltis concluded that many shifts were the result of supply and demand and that "legitimate" trade did not replace the slave trade. While the former became profitable, the combined revenues from both were so small that they did not compete with each other for African "factors of production." But his own statistics show that slaving from Lagos dropped from 82 vessels in 1841-1850 to 5 vessels over 1851-1860, values too dramatic for the influence of naval activity to be excluded fully (Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 164-165, 182-184 and 253-254, Table A.10, "Ships Embarking and Intending to Embark Slaves, Major Port of Embarkation by Decade, 1811-67").

⁹³ The remaining percentages were distributed, in small amounts, over a variety of other destinations (Eltis, et al. *Slave Trade: A Database*).

On both sides of the Atlantic, British representatives reported that the Americans were to blame for the continuance of the slave trade. A British judge on the Mixed Commission court at Havana reported on 12 April 1857 that the Cuban slave trade was extensive. At least fifteen ships involved had sailed from New Orleans within the previous two months. Vessels from other American ports had also sailed, while “several vessels have also gone from this Port [Havana] and Matanzas.” In addition, Consul Benjamin Campbell, at Lagos, believed there was an American conspiracy to continue the slave trade to populate Cuba with slave labour as a prelude to annexation. Palmerston, now Prime Minister but still with an eye on foreign affairs, noted that Campbell’s dispatch explained “some of the reasons why the US govt severely encourage the slave trade to Cuba[.]” But Palmerston remained convinced that an attack on the African side of the slave trade was best. If any chiefs had broken their treaties with the British, they should be punished like those of Lagos.⁹⁴

Conclusion

Britain had to balance its strategic needs with domestic political demands. But with the elite behind the squadron, the Royal Navy maintained its commitment to slave trade suppression, implementing free trade policies, and countering the French threat. Equally important, British strategy was also to keep on good relations other powers along the coast, including the United States. The Royal Navy carefully pursued treaties with natives and gave other powers the option to join them. The Royal Navy was also forceful against those natives who refused to capitulate, but the squadron was careful to inform other Western powers, like the United States, of impending actions like blockades. One goal of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty was to govern the use of sea power along the West African coast, to reduce and prevent Anglo-American tension

⁹⁴ PRO, Adm 123/177, Shelburne, Foreign Office, to Admiralty, 8 May 1857 and J.P. Crawford to Earl of Clarendon, 13 April 1857; and PRO, FO 84/1031, Bight of Benin (Lagos): Consul Campbell, 1857, Campbell to Earl of Clarendon, Her Majesty’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1 August 1857 and Palmerston’s attached minute on the letter, 6 October 1857.

through the presence of both the Royal and US Navy. With the US Navy along the coast, Royal Navy vessels would no longer need to stop US-flagged ships and the British hoped that the Americans would suppress their involvement in the slave trade.

But British and American objectives were different. While the Royal Navy combined most aspects of British strategic policy for the West African coast, American goals were separate. Despite the opinions of some US officers – usually on the coast for no longer than a year – slave trade suppression was a distant secondary objective to furthering US commerce and protecting it from British interference. As the differences between British and American strategies accumulated, tensions again rose. Consequently, despite British care, their different strategies conflicted with each other. Britain remained irritated as American involvement in the slave trade continued. Furthermore, British power along the coast grew and exacerbated American suspicions. However, modifications to both nations' use of sea power provided the mechanism through which Britain and America could relate, reduce tension, and avoid war.

Chapter Seven: The US Navy and West Africa, 1843-1857

The deployment of the US West African squadron is significant because their duties reflected the government's goals. Its main duty was to protect and promote American commerce and prevent British interference with US-flagged ships. Slave trade suppression was too contentious an issue at home for the US Navy to focus on off West Africa. They captured some slavers and sent them to the United States, but because of the squadron's small size, legal constraints, and the squadron's primary goal, Americans failed to patrol the entire coast just for slavers. Instead, the American attack on Berriby (1843) epitomised the squadron's purpose. It instilled in natives "respect" for Westerners and their traders, to the pleasure of both British and American observers. American and British goals differed, but sea power furthered their objectives with the presence of both navies. To those ends, the small US force periodically cruised the coast, collected commercial intelligence, "showed the flag," and occasionally used force to show that Americans were serious.

Nevertheless, home waters remained important, as during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) when West African deployment was further curtailed, and those warships that remained had to also protect American shipping in the Eastern Atlantic from potential attack by Mexican privateers. With commerce protection and promotion the primary objective, individual views on slavery rarely rose beyond occasional operational comments. Policy was set by a Washington unsympathetic to slave trade suppression, but wanting commerce protected; naval officers carried out their duties. Only officers like Andrew Hull Foote, sympathetic to the cause of the Colonisation Society and slave trade suppression, offered greater enthusiasm for the secondary objective.

With slave trade suppression and commerce protection separate issues, the British were sceptical of American sincerity. In turn, Americans feared British commercial advances, in particular the growth of British steam shipping that provided

regulation communications between the African coast and Britain. American commodores, like Issac Mayo, believed that unless the government acted, American merchants would be driven from the African coast by more efficient British counterparts aided by regular steam lines and Royal Navy protection. Despite the intention of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, and some mutually beneficial effects of sea power, the separate objectives and corresponding strategies of the Royal Navy and US Navy generated tension between the countries.

The New American Squadron

Commodore Matthew Perry, the first commander of the US African squadron, was familiar with the West African coast, having sortied there during the piracy crisis. Desensitised to the horrors of the slave trade from his youth, and with little government appetite for slave trade suppression, Perry's concern was with protecting American commerce and settlements. Perry, brother of Oliver Hazard Perry, was from Newport, Rhode Island, a maritime community that delved into "speculative ventures" like the legal slave trade. Schroeder concluded that Perry's youth "taught him that both [slavery and the slave trade] were acceptable and tolerable[.]" Perry's brother Raymond married into the "D'Wolfe family," who had slaves on their Cuban plantation. Senator James D'Wolf, Raymond's father-in-law, had voted against the earlier plan to give the British the right of search over American-flagged vessels. Still, Matthew supported the goals of the Colonisation Society, but his objections to slavery remained muted. He believed that it was a Southern problem.¹ Off West Africa, Perry underestimated the extent of the slave trade in the 1820s, but his ship was rarely off West Africa.

In contrast to support for commerce protection and promotion, Washington's commitment to slave trade suppression was less enthusiastic. Upshur supported naval expansion, but he and President Tyler were Virginians and owned slaves. Soon after

¹ John H. Schroeder, *Matthew Calbraith Perry: Antebellum Sailor and Diplomat* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 3-9, 15-21, and 40-41.

Perry's deployment, James K. Polk, Democrat from Tennessee, rose to the White House, but he too owned slaves. Moreover, the domestic slave trade continued, even in Washington, DC. During Perry's command, the position of Secretary of the Navy also changed five times; of the new secretaries, three were Southerners. Schroeder surmised that John Quincy Adams' opinion illustrated the national mood. Adams concluded that the administration was insincere about the slave trade, but that the British were equally mischievous because of their continued disrespect for freedom of the seas. Therefore, he supported Upshur's instructions to Perry.²

In addition to the tactical use of the navy, its "role began to change in other significant and unforeseen ways[.]" The American economy and foreign trade were growing and "[p]oliticians, public officials, and newspaper editors all predicted a future bonanza for Americans in the vast reaches of the Pacific." In commerce protection and promotion American political leaders were unified. The navy was used overseas to "show the flag" and carry out diplomatic duties. Where in war an "impulsive and heroic" officer like his brother Oliver Hazard was effective, in peacetime Matthew Perry's "deliberate, careful, and thoughtful" behaviour was more appropriate to further American interests along a coast embedded with diplomatic sensitivities.³ During this time, many Americans believed that naval officers needed to be diplomats. Some, like Upshur, advocated the creation of a Naval Academy, in part to provide officers with an education suited to a variety of roles as the nation's needs evolved.⁴ Perry, like Hotham, symbolises the use of sea power in this era. He deployed to West Africa, later advised

² Schroeder, *Matthew Calbraith Perry*, 97-101.

³ Schroeder, *Matthew Calbraith Perry*, 22-25 and 97.

⁴ Mark C. Hunter, " '... With the Propriety and Decorum which Characterize the Society of Gentlemen': The United States Naval Academy and its Youth, 1845-1861" (MA diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1999), 39-47.

Navy Secretary George Bancroft on the establishment of the Naval Academy, and then “opened” Japan.⁵

Given the national sentiment, it is understandable that Upshur reminded Perry that American commerce along the coast was “becoming every day more and more valuable” and it needed protection. But Upshur also reminded Perry to be respectful of the rights of other nations. Foreign warships, like Britain’s, acted at their peril if they boarded a US-flagged vessel to ascertain its true nationality. If the vessel proved to be American, then the foreign country was liable for damages if the masters and owners sought redress, otherwise Perry was forbidden to act. Nevertheless, Upshur hoped that Perry would co-operate with the British, but gave him wide discretion.⁶

Washington wanted American rights protected, while preserving relations with other nations like Britain. Significantly, Washington renewed the instructions given to Perry with each subsequent commodore with little variation, and little further strategic or tactical communication. The Secretary ordered Perry to cruise from Madeira and the Canary Islands to the Bight of Biafra, then along the African coast to 30° West and further if necessary. Upshur advised that slavers rarely exhibited signs that they were involved in the illegal trade and often disguised themselves as legitimate traders. The slavers arrived on the coast, ran “into some river” and dropped off any slave trade implements. Then they made deals with coastal slave dealers and sailed about the coast conducting legitimate trade until the appointed time to return to collect their human cargo.⁷

Perry’s orders to his officers generally reflect the spirit and letter of Upshur’s instructions. He told them they were authorised to use all necessary means to protect American-flagged ships from searches by other nations. But he also reminded them to

⁵ Schroeder, *Matthew Calbraith Perry*, 125-126 and 164-183.

⁶ *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 3-5, A.P. Upshur to Commodore M.C. Perry, 30 March 1843.

⁷ *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 5-7, A.P. Upshur to Commodore M.C. Perry, 30 March 1843.

inform foreign warships if a suspected vessel had no right to American protection.⁸ Schroeder opined that Perry simply carried out his government's orders in focusing on commerce protection: "[g]iven the horror of the slave trade, it is tempting to fault Perry, but that would place him in a historically inaccurate context."⁹ Perry's specific orders to several vessels, meanwhile, show the American concentration on vessel protection, with few comments about the slave trade. The *Decatur*, for example, was to collect as much intelligence on the legal and slave trade as possible, but was to concentrate on that of Americans and keep "a special eye to the protection and advancement of American trade."¹⁰ The *Porpoise*, Lieutenant Commander Arthur Lewis commanding, for example, was already on station off the West African coast and waiting for supplies.

Perry's first order to Lewis was to check on American traders and settlements in the region. Perry told him that this was "with a view to protection of the lawful commerce of the United States, and the suppression of the Slave Trade when prosecuted under the American Flag." In late 1843, Perry ordered the *Porpoise*, under Lieutenant Commander Thomas T. Craven, to sail the coast to Gorée then go to the English settlement on the Gambia. Perry remarked that, "you will take pains to inform the authorities and the principal head men that a sufficient number of American vessels of war is [sic] upon the coast to punish any interference with American lawful trade[.]"¹¹

The reports of Commander Joel Abbot, of the *Decatur*, and that of Commander Henry Bruce of the *Truxton*, are indicative of American activities and opinions during the squadron's early years. On 18 January 1844, the *Decatur* arrived at King Cass

⁸ NA, RG 45, Letter Books of Commodore Matthew C. Perry, March 10, 1843 - February 20, 1845 (hereafter, Perry letter books), M.C. Perry, General Order No. 1, 21 June 1843, M.C. Perry, General Order No. 2, 3 July 1843, M.C. Perry, order, 1 August 1843 and M.C. Perry, General Order no. 10, 24 November 1843.

⁹ Schroeder, *Matthew Calbraith Perry*, 260.

¹⁰ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to J. Abbott, letter 1, 22 December 1843, M.C. Perry to David Henshaw, 25 December 1843 and M.C. Perry to J. Abbot and M.C. Perry to Thomas T. Craven, 4 March 1844.

¹¹ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to Arthur Lewis, 17 April 1843 and M.C. Perry to Thomas T. Craven, 12 October 1843.

Town, the site of an American missionary settlement. They hoped that the presence of a US warship along the coast near Gaboon would help their cause, US commerce, and “the suppression of the slave trade.” Abbott noted that traders carried out legitimate and slave trade several degrees East and South of Perry’s cruising limits. By late January 1845, the US warship *Truxton*, Commander Henry Bruce, had completed another cruise. Bruce believed that the slave trade was still carried on most prominently from Gallinas, but emphasised that Americans were increasingly involved in legitimate trade.¹²

While Commodore Perry continued his operations, Washington proceeded with finding his replacement, Commodore Charles W. Skinner. When Skinner took command, he continued operations and that spring a prize, the schooner *Spitfire*, arrived in Boston harbour for trial and was confiscated.¹³ But Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft, historian from Massachusetts, told Skinner that because of budget constraints the Navy Department was unable to send reinforcements. He approved of Commodore Skinner’s operations and hoped soon to be able to relieve him and a portion of his squadron.¹⁴

In contrast to their concern over commerce protection and promotion, the squadron reported little slaver activity and operations against the slavers were minimal. Perry reported on 18 May 1844, that Commander Joseph Tattnall had captured two suspected slavers, the brig *Uncas* and the *Crawford*, although the courts later released them.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Perry told Secretary of the Navy David Henshaw, from

¹² NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 105, African Squadron, Extract of report from Joel Abbot, enclosure in M.C. Perry to Secretary of the Navy, 18 May 1844 and Henry Bruce to Commodore M.C. Perry, 25 January 1845.

¹³ Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, Appendix A, “Vessels Arrested by American Officers for Violation of the Slave-Trade Acts, 1837-1862,” 214.

¹⁴ NA, RG 45, Secretary of the Navy, Record of Confidential Letters (hereafter, Secretary of the Navy Confidential Letters), Sept. 12, 1843 to Feb. 28, 1849, George Bancroft to Commodore Skinner, 18 June 1845; and NA, RG 45, Secretary of the Navy, Letters Sent, Mar. 11 – Dec. 6, 1845, Geo. Bancroft to Como. Chas. W. Skinner, 7 November 1845.

¹⁵ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to Secretary of the Navy, letter 4, 18 May 1844.

Massachusetts, that he had seen no indication of American involvement in the slave trade, although he was aware of slaver tactics and strategies to avoid detection. He wrote that when in the West Indies, if a US warship approached a slaver, “she displays Spanish colors and exhibits her Spanish papers[.]” Meanwhile, she displays “her the American Flag and papers and fictitious log book” to prevent British warships from seizing her. Given the disadvantages, Perry felt that it was impossible for the squadron to stop and detect “all these abuses” everywhere along the West African coast.¹⁶

Skinner, Perry’s replacement, also emphasised commercial matters and offered few comments on the slave trade beyond the operational requirements of the squadron. Skinner believed that the US Navy should use as many vessels as possible to cover the entire coast and maintain a constant presence, but he believed large armaments were unnecessary.¹⁷ He reported on West African commerce, yet admitted that his knowledge of the slave trade was “vague and unsatisfactory,” although more time might provide more detail. In the end, for the year April 1845 to March 1846, the squadron captured only six slavers.¹⁸ Meanwhile, in total between 1843 and 1850, the United States captured only 17 slavers.¹⁹ Regardless of individual opinion, with commerce protection and promotion the squadron’s primary objective, officers offered few comments on slave trade suppression beyond what was required of the distant secondary goal.

Berriby and a Show of US force

While the US was limited in its ability and willingness to police the slave trade, their

¹⁶ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to David Henshaw, 25 December 1843 and M.C. Perry to Secretary of the Navy, letter 4, 18 May 1844.

¹⁷ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 106, African Squadron, no. 8, Chas. Wm. Skinner to J.Y. Mason, 16 March 1846 and no. 17, Chas. Wm. Skinner to Secretary of the Navy, 20 June 1845.

¹⁸ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 106, African Squadron, no. 47, Chas. Wm. Skinner to George Bancroft, 17 January 1846.

¹⁹ Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*. The total 17 is technically for this CD-ROM’s period 1841-50, but there were no US captures until 1843. While this database is useful, this researcher must point out the difficulty involved in customising queries beyond the pre-sets provided by the software.

wider goal of protecting US interests allowed them to undertake limited military strikes, against lesser native powers, in support of American strategy. The most important example of this strategy was the attack on Berriby (1843). The action against Berriby on the Ivory Coast was in revenge for the attack on the schooner *Mary Carver*. The action is significant because it had long-term consequences for Americans along the coast. The outcome reinforced the American's belief that their West African strategy was correct, although it made relations with the natives tense. But the British also concluded that the American use of sea power against Berriby made natives more receptive to British policy.

The Secretary of the Navy had reported to Congress in 1842 that natives had attacked the Salem merchant ship *Mary Carver*. On the coast, Perry's officers reported signs that Americans were in the middle of disputes. Thus, the US squadron's duty was to make its presence known to the locals, but Washington left to the commodore's discretion the squadron's tactics. Soon after Perry arrived along the coast, he wrote the governor of Cape Palmas and told him that it was time for revenge. Perry told Secretary Upshur that Governor Joseph Robert of Liberia believed that force would "have a salutary influence in impressing upon the natives greater awe of the American flag." Perry concluded that "it is my purpose to communicate with all the various tribes along the Coast and to admonish them of the necessity of receiving and treating the American trading vessels in a friendly manner."²⁰ Late in 1843, Perry attacked because he believed that slow reprisals had only emboldened the natives against American traders. He opined that his actions would restore the friendly trading relationship between legitimate traders and the Berriby people, as the traders could then safely return.²¹

²⁰ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to Governor or Person in Charge of the American Colony at Cape Palmas Coast of Africa, 17 April 1843 and M.C. Perry to A.P. Upshur, 3 August 1843.

²¹ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to John B. Russwurm, 10 August 1843, M.C. Perry to Jno D. [sic] Russwurm, 12 August 1843 and M.C. Perry to David Henshaw, 21 December 1843.

Perry went so far as to advocate “ethnic cleansing” by January 1844. He was knowledgeable about the workings of the native African economy and advocated attacking it to secure American trading interests. The Americans should destroy the villages along the coast where Americans were treated poorly. He rationalised his plan with the understanding that the Cracow people were foreign to the coast and the original inhabitants, who were friendly toward US traders, would return. Lieutenant Craven, commanding the *Porpoise*, provided some indication of the natives’ reactions to Perry’s actions. The people of Little Berriby had moved inland and wanted Perry’s permission to rebuild their settlement along the coast. Craven thought that the natives now respected American power and would give its citizens aid. Commander Abbot found a similar situation. The natives were peaceful toward foreigners because of Perry’s attack on Berriby.²²

Where Britain used sea power to push African factors of production into legitimate commerce; Americans used it to intimidate natives into trading with US citizens, while doing little against the slave trade. Nevertheless, the results were similar. When Commodore Skinner arrived on the coast, he had a different opinion of the attack on Berriby. When he passed Berriby, in the *Jamestown*, the natives fled in horror; he met similar cases of fear along the coast and was aghast at what had occurred.²³ But he too believed that the pacification of Berriby added to American prestige. Thereafter, he believed that trades in hides, gold dust, palm oil, ivory, and camwood flourished in exchange for products made in the United States. The benefits of US sea power had

²² NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to David Henshaw, 15 January 1844; NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 105, African Squadron, T.T. Craven to Commodore M.C. Perry, 24 April 1844; NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 105, 331, African Squadron, Joel Abbot to Commodore M.C. Perry, 6 November 1844.

²³ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 106, African Squadron, no. 9, Chas. Wm. Skinner to J.Y. Mason, 17 March 1845.

even reached into the African soul: “the lone missionary experiences and acknowledges the advantages arising from the protection of a flag at once feared and respected.”²⁴

The British also noted with pleasure the benefits of the American attack on wider British strategy for the coast. The American presence fit perfectly with London’s treaty-making strategy. Murray noted that the character of the region had changed significantly since the American naval action in December 1843. In 1848, the Royal Navy was able to sign one of their treaties with the Chiefs of Grand Berriby; the Chiefs knowing what would happen if they defied a naval power. Murray noted that the Kroo and Fishmen tribes of the region never undertook the slave trade. But the first three articles of the new treaty dealt with ending the slave trade, the fourth with free trade for the British, while the fifth was an offer for the French to join in the treaty.²⁵ Despite divergent strategies, US “peacetime” policy seemed to observers to have a positive impact on both American and British objectives.

The Mexican-American War and Curtailment of US West African Activities

Still, potential trade growth in emerging regions, like Africa, remained subservient to US home waters and with the acquisition of California American expansive dreams looked West and into the Pacific. Consequently, home commitments mitigated US naval effectiveness off West Africa and contributed to British beliefs that American efforts were insincere. The strategic inflexibility that Smith Thompson feared during the 1820s, was a reality by the Mexican-American War. The increased tension with Mexico, and the resulting war, shaped American response to the West African coast as the small US Navy had to be concentrated near home waters for immediate war purposes.

The United States annexed Texas in 1845, and on 13 May 1846 war erupted

²⁴ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 106, African Squadron, no. 8, Chas. Wm. Skinner to J.Y. Mason, 16 March 1846 and no. 17, Chas. Wm. Skinner to Secretary of the Navy, 20 June 1845.

²⁵ IUP, vol. 36, (Class A and B), 254-255, no. 187 and enclosures 5 and 6 in no. 187, “Agreement with the Chiefs of Grand Bereby,” 25 February 1848 and Alexander Murray, “Observations of Commander Murray on the Agreement with the Chiefs of Grand Bereby,” 26 February 1848.

with Mexico. That day, Congress authorised armed private merchant ships and the completion of naval construction to aid the war. The Americans instituted a blockade of the Mexican coast and used Anton Lizardo, near Vera Cruz, as a coal station for steam vessels. By October 1846, the US Navy seized Tampico, and by March 1847, land forces seized Vera Cruz. Meanwhile, the Pacific squadron sailed North from Peru, blockaded the Pacific Mexican coast, and took San Francisco Bay. By 4 July 1846, the California Republic was created and American territory had dramatically expanded West.²⁶

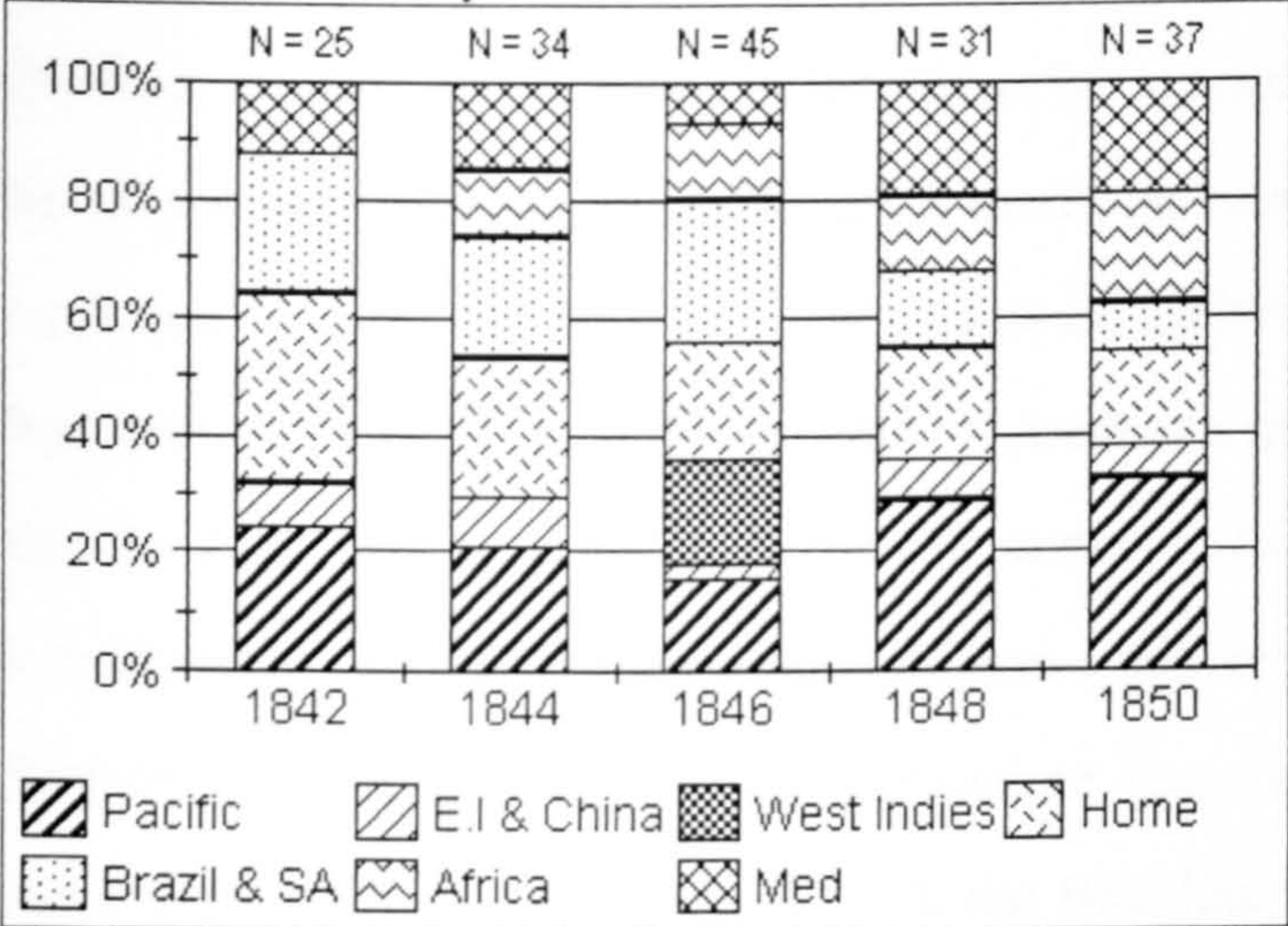
The Americans duly informed the British of the war and the blockade, although American diplomats observed that many Britons eyed the war with unease. Ambassador McLane found that the outbreak of war was unexpected in Britain, and American participation in the conflict was “unpopular.” The British feared that the US would settle the boundary with Mexico before that of Oregon with Britain, and McLane feared the war with Mexico would stall any further talks with the British. But in this era of the emerging “New Rule,” McLane warned that privateers and warships should be careful not to interfere with “the rights and commerce of neutrals” so that even in war, the use of sea power would not harm Anglo-American relations.²⁷ It would set an example for the British.

Nevertheless, figure 7.1 shows the gathering US sea power in the West Indies in 1846, during the Mexican crisis. In response, the African squadron also took on more tasks, without an increase in their share of deployment, and watched for Mexican privateers. It was a force meant to exercise a subtle presence along the coast, rather than provide wartime support. Consequently, from 1846, into late 1849, the combined weight of problems pushed the US Navy to the sidelines in West Africa, while the Royal Navy continued making free trade treaties and suppressing the slave trade.

²⁶ Paolo E. Coletta, *The American Naval Heritage*, 3rd Edition (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 117-118.

²⁷ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 54, Louis McLane to James Buchanan, 3 June 1846.

Figure 7.1 US Navy Time Series, 1842-1850



Source: Calculated from United States, *Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1842-1850.

Note: EI = East Indies; SA = South America; Med = Mediterranean; N= Number total number of warships.

Off Africa, by October 1845, Commodore Skinner received information from newspapers that relations between the United States and Mexico had deteriorated. Combined with the navy’s budget restrictions, the newspapers should have provided Skinner with a reason why reinforcements were lacking. By 29 December 1845, Secretary Bancroft dispatched Commodore George C. Read to relieve Skinner. Because of the conflict with Mexico, however, Bancroft ordered Read to guard against “the depredations of privateers[.]” Bancroft also told Skinner to “exercise the utmost vigilance in protecting American commerce and interests” en route from West Africa to Boston, and pay particular attention to Matanzas and Havana for Mexican privateers. During Read’s outward voyage he encountered many ships, but no Mexican privateers. After Read arrived on the coast he had an opportunity to assess the American squadron and its duties. He also wished for more vessels and concluded that the squadron would be unable to carry out all its assigned tasks.²⁸

²⁸ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 106, African Squadron, no. 34 and no. 38, Chas. Wm. Skinner to George Bancroft, 12 October 1845 and Chas. Wm. Skinner to George Bancroft, 20 October 1845; *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 11-12, G. Bancroft to George C. Read, 29 December 1845; NA, RG 45, Secretary of the Navy Confidential Letters, Sept. 12, 1843 to Feb. 28, 1849, George Bancroft to George Read, 21 May 1846 and George Bancroft to Commodore Skinner, 21 May 1846; and NA, RG

The squadron was under pressure to protect a wide area during the war. Consul William Carrol, at St. Helena, for example, worried over newspaper reports that Mexicans were inflicting reprisals on US merchant vessels. He wanted the West African squadron's protection, but Read replied that St. Helena was too far away and that the best protection would be a fleet to convoy American merchant vessels. Read exclaimed that he knew the character of the American people too well and the merchant vessels would refuse to wait for other vessels to form a convoy, fearing lost opportunities to the first to arrive on the coast. The commodore concluded that "if the protection you suggest should become necessary," ask the Brazilian squadron for help. The African squadron was drained of resources and Read told Secretary J.Y. Mason that "I pray continually for a peace with Mexico to get these miserable sailing craft relieved."²⁹

Other regions also requested immediate protection by the African squadron. On 31 January 1847, the Secretary of the US legation at Madrid, Thomas Reynolds, took it upon himself to write to "the officer in command of any armed vessel" of the United States. He was concerned about the Mexican-American War and the lack of any US naval protection for US interests away from home waters. On 31 May 1847, Read acknowledged Reynolds' letter. By then Read had newspapers and correspondence from the United States that supported Reynolds' request for assistance. In response, Read dispatched the warship *Marion* to Gibraltar. Read shared Reynolds' concern about the threat to US commerce from Mexican privateers if they succeeded in outfitting from England or Spain. But Read warned that the *Marion*, after being on the West African coast for so long, was "by no means fit to cruise for privateers," although it was the only vessel capable of carrying out such duties.³⁰

45, Squadron Letters, vol. 82 (pt.), African Squadron, Geo. C. Read to Geo. Bancroft, 26 June 1846.

²⁹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 82 (pt.), African Squadron, Geo C. Read to Wm. Carrol, 12 March 1847, enclosure in Geo. C. Read to Jno. Y. Mason, 26 March 1847 and Geo. C. Read to Jno. Y. Mason, 26 March 1847.

³⁰ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 82 (pt.), African Squadron, Thomas Reynolds to the Officer in Command of any armed vessel of the U. States, 31 January 1847, enclosure in Geo. C. Read to

In contrast, Read told Washington that he had met with the senior British and French naval officers on the coast, and the Royal Navy had a formidable force. Their ships were numerous and large, and this enabled them to stay off the slave trading stations for longer periods than the smaller American warships. Read opined that even if the US deployed three times as many warships to the coast, they would still need two vessels off each suspected slaving station to stop and search adequately every vessel. Meanwhile, the other naval commanders noted that they had not seen a US warship along the coast “for several months before” Read’s arrival. Read felt that the whole situation hurt his crew’s morale. Many, he professed, arrived on the coast with hopes of suppressing the slave trade, supporting their nation’s honour, and making names for themselves. He opined that US efforts were futile unless Congress enacted tighter legislation against those involved in the slave trade. The squadron might be able to meet its obligations to protect legitimate US commerce, but “they are not likely to meet the expectations of those who desire the slave trade annihilated.”³¹

Over 1846 and 1847, the ongoing dispute between the Mexicans and Americans affected adversely US naval operations along the African coast and Anglo-American naval co-operation. Palmerston pressed the Americans to increase their naval presence off Africa, and in particular to send vessels to the East African coast to suppress American involvement in the slave trade of that region. But British Ambassador Richard Pakeham told Palmerston that he would not pressure the Americans further, for “the whole of its available naval resources being required for the prosecution of the war with Mexico[.]”³² Until the strategic situation improved, US operations stalled much to

Jno Y. Mason, 12 May 1847 and Geo. C. Read to T.C. Reynolds, Secretary of the US Legation at Madrid, 31 May 1847.

³¹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 82 (pt.), African Squadron, George Read to George Bancroft, 16 September 1846.

³² IUP, vol. 33, Correspondence with Foreign Powers (Class D – 1846), 147-148, no. 95, R. Pakeham to Viscount Palmerston, 13 December 1846.

Britain's displeasure, but they refrained from pushing the Americans too hard. However, legal problems also contributed to the declining US effort.

Legal Problems Curtail US Navy Efforts

For political, legal, and strategic reasons the US West African squadron was left on its own, stretched with too many tasks, and focussed more on commerce protection than slave trade suppression. Courts in the United States also handed the limited anti-slavery operations a defeat over 1846-47. The cases, and Washington's reaction, are significant because they reveal how the courts tied the American squadron's hands. But they also reveal Washington's insistence on uninterrupted trade; slave trade suppression played little role in the development of American wealth. For example, when in 1846 the British warship *Actaeon* found the *Malaga*, from Beverly, Massachusetts, loaded with goods thought used in the slave trade, they concluded that the *Malaga* was guilty under US law of "aiding and abetting the slave trade." But New England Judge Charles L. Woodbury, and later another Judge Benjamin R. Curtis, ruled that such vessels violated no such laws unless they had a direct stake in the slave trade. Thereafter, the case against the *Malaga* was dropped and the owners sued.³³

Secretary of the Navy Mason, lawyer from Richmond, Virginia³⁴, told Commodore Read that several such cases had occurred. He understood the difficulty under which the US officers worked, and "by no means desir[e]d to check or sensure [sic] the vigilance of American cruisers," but the free flow of trade was more important. Mason wrote that to prevent "interruptions to lawful commerce" and to stop "complaints from innocent traders" the US Navy had to be more careful when seizing suspected slavers.³⁵ The result was further prioritising of trade protection over slaver

³³ Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 102-104.

³⁴ K. Jack Bauer, "John Young Mason," in Coletta, (ed.), *American Secretaries of the Navy*, vol. 1, 238.

³⁵ NA, RG 45, Secretary of the Navy Confidential Letters, Sept. 12, 1843 to Feb. 28, 1849, J.Y. Mason to Commodore Read, 16 November 1846.

suppression, and fear in officers along the West African coast of the legal and career ramifications if they stopped any vessel. The result for slaver activities was ominous: Read told Washington that reports had reached him that the *Malaga* and *Casket* had returned to the African coast, loaded slaves, and departed unmolested.³⁶

Howard concluded that the result was a “mass shirking of assigned duties, carefully concealed from the American public” that lasted for about two years until the damage suits against the US Navy were settled.³⁷ But the shift in the American focus was at Washington’s insistence and conformed to their focus on trade. The immediate American goal of using sea power to protect trade is significant because it failed to form a nexus with suppressing the slave trade. The reality of US naval deployment therefore contradicts Harmon’s thesis that American naval deployment to protect commerce resulted in the US Navy suppressing the slave trade.³⁸ American policy also had implications for Anglo-American relations as again Britain questioned the American commitment to slave trade suppression.

The US Navy and Commercial Goals, 1847-1854

With legal and relief problems, the US West African squadron carried out its duties as best it could, but focussed increasingly on commercial protection. In the regions that they patrolled, American officers, like their British counterparts, noted areas of increased commerce and avenues of potential advancement. In October 1846, the Americans believed that the slave trade was largely suppressed by the Royal Navy’s vigilance, and to some small extent by that of the French Navy. Commodore Read was serious about his work and even declined Secretary Bancroft’s personal request to stop

³⁶ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 89 (pt.), African Squadron, Geo. C. Read to John Y. Mason, 11 December 1846, letter 1, G.W. Read to Jno. Y. Mason, 10 March 1847, and Geo. Read to Jno. Y. Mason, 31 March 1847.

³⁷ Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 105.

³⁸ Harmon, “Suppress and Protect,” 1-3.

at Madeira for wine. The cruise of the US warship *Marion* from October 1846 to April 1847 is typical of that undertaken by the Americans during this period. During a visit to the Bight of Benin, Captain Simonds, for example, reported that commerce there had declined and he had seen no American ships. By 28 January they arrived off Cape Lopez and visited Cabinda. The commander of the British warship *Larne*, the only ship there, informed the Americans that "no Americans had been there for months." Commodore Benjamin Cooper's cruising orders from 1849 to Captain A.G. Gordon of the US warship *Porpoise* are also indicative of the American patrol pattern near the end of this period. In July, Cooper ordered the *Porpoise* to sail South from Porto Praia and pay particular attention to the Bight of Benin. The *Porpoise* was to visit Monrovia, Bassa Cove, Sinon, Cape Palmas, the Bight of Benin, then Whydah. The *Porpoise* could sail farther along the coast at the captain's discretion.³⁹

The Americans still captured slavers, but the results were disappointing because of the court decisions. On 2 August 1846, the *Marion* captured the *Casket*, from Beverly, Massachusetts, near the Congo River and sent it to Boston for trial, but the court dismissed the case.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, in 1847, the *Chancellor* had escaped from the British and was captured by the Americans. Read had reports that the *Chancellor* was involved in the slave trade and dispatched the warship *Dolphin* to find her. But Commodore Read also feared the British could fire on a legitimate US trader as they had the *Chancellor*. By April, the *Dolphin* succeeded and sent the *Chancellor* to New York for trial but the court also dismissed the case. There was little comment from

³⁹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 82 (pt.), African Squadron, L.E. Simonds to Com. Geo. C. Read, 9 October 1846, Geo. C. Read, "Private," to George Bancroft, 5 October 1846, and L.E. Simonds to Commodore Read, 20 April 1847; and NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 107, African Squadron, Benj. Cooper to A.G. Gordon, 10 May 1849 and Benj. Cooper to A.G. Gordon, 29 July 1849.

⁴⁰ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 106, African Squadron, no. 48 with enclosures A through H, Chas. Wm. Skinner to George Bancroft, 27 January 1846 and postscript dated 31 January 1846; and Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, Appendix A, "Vessels Arrested by American Officers for Violation of the Slave-Trade Acts, 1837-1862," 214-233.

Washington about the squadron's operations. Secretary Mason simply approved the squadron's actions and acknowledged receipt of dispatches.⁴¹

By 1849, the lacklustre American performance generated concern in their British counterparts. In autumn 1849, for example, Commodore Fanshawe, Royal Navy, told Commodore Francis H. Gregory, US Navy, that American merchant vessels were involved in the slave trade at Benguela, Angola, and the Congo. Fanshawe was disappointed that the British had not even encountered an American warship South of the equator. Irritated, he concluded that the use of the American flag hurt British goals and the Royal Navy could do nothing, legally, about it.⁴² But that autumn the courts ruled in favour of the American officers sued by vessel owners, and the United States began greater deployment farther South allowing greater co-operation with the British. Regardless, the squadron continued implementing national policy by supporting American colonies and commercial activities; their importance actually increasing with the growth of American business for California.

On 12 February 1850, Gregory provided an indication of his squadron's focus. He reported that a number of US merchant ships had arrived at Porto Praia for California and the navy had provided assistance to those in need. He thought that American economic and strategic interests along the West African coast were even increasing.⁴³ John Marston, commander of the US warship *Yorktown*, also believed that the region's economy was good, with exports of palm oil, camwood, ivory, and coffee, among other items. Marston even called on the American Colonisation Society to send

⁴¹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 82 (pt.), African Squadron, Jno. Pope to Commodore Geo. C. Read, 5 March 1847, Geo. C. Read to Jno Y. Mason, 12 May 1847, Geo. C. Read to J.Y. Mason, 15 July 1847, and Geo. C. Read to John Y. Mason, 6 August 1847; and NA, RG 45, Secretary of the Navy Letters Sent, June 12, 1848 – Apr. 16, 1849, J.Y. Mason to W.C. Bolton, 31 August 1848; and *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 13-14, J.Y. Mason to Commodore Benjamin Cooper, 10 November 1848.

⁴² *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 13-14, Wm. Ballard Preston to Captain F.H. Gregory, 17 August 1849; and IUP, vol. 37, (Class A and B), 301, no. 208 and enclosure 1 in no. 208, Commodore Fanshawe to Commodore Gregory, 26 December 1849 and Arthur Fanshawe to Secretary of the Admiralty, 1 January 1850.

⁴³ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 108, African Squadron, F.H. Gregory to Wm. Ballard Preston, 12 February 1850.

more settlers.⁴⁴ Furthermore, in early 1854, Commodore Isaac Mayo told Washington that he would, as ordered, send a vessel to the aid of Charles Hoffman, from Salem, who had difficulty with merchants who operated between Sierra Leone and Cape Roxo. Hoffman received the US naval support he long desired. Only after those tasks were completed, would the *Dale* then sail to the Southern coast and relieve the *Perry*.⁴⁵

Mayo, like his gentlemanly British counterparts, believed that the appointment of consuls to the West African coast were important for US commerce, would take some weight off the US Navy, and help suppress the slave trade. For example, he felt that American commerce with the Loanda region was important and the “presence of an American consul” was needed. Loanda was also “the centre of trade and the chief sea port on the South Coast of Africa.” Undoubtedly, Mayo must have also surmised that such an appointment would provide an American presence on land that would help relieve some of the pressure on his small squadron. He told Washington that a permanent consul would inspect ship’s papers and cargo that arrived in the region. He noted that “too many of them, I fear, have of late employed our flag, while in the prosecution of the slave trade.” Mayo appointed several consuls during his tenure, including to Sierra Leone, the English settlement of Bathurst, and to the Angola region.⁴⁶ But such proactive US naval officers were the minority.

The US Navy and the Slave Trade, 1850-1857

While the British solidified their West African policy, the US Navy maintained support for US commerce along West Africa, separate from the contentious issue of slavery and slave trade suppression that divided the nation. Nevertheless, its post-1849 deployment

⁴⁴ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 108, African Squadron, John Marston to Frans. H. Gregory, 8 April 1850.

⁴⁵ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 25 January 1854.

⁴⁶ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 17 November 1853 and I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 3 April 1854, and enclosure Wm. C. Whittle to Commo. I. Mayo, 11 February 1854.

against slavers became less complicated after favourable court decisions in the United States. The US Navy, freed from some of its legal restraints, increased efforts against the slavers and continued to protect and promote legitimate American commerce. But economic growth and slave trade suppression remained separate. In 1849, Judge John K. Kane, Eastern Pennsylvania District, concluded that the *Malaga* had indeed operated under suspicious circumstances. He eased legal restrictions and found that the evidence that the vessel was chartered to a known slaver and carrying known slaving goods, was sufficient for an arrest. American patrols resumed South of the equator by 1850, and “really suspicious vessels were arrested.”⁴⁷

Because using sea power to suppress the slave trade was of secondary importance, suppression efforts were subject to the whims of individual commodores and officers committed to the cause. Commodores who disliked the African coast, or felt their squadron was too small to prove effective, curtailed deployment. Those who supported slave trade suppression also believed that the US squadron’s base needed to be farther South to prove effective against the illegal activity. By the late 1850s, like their British counterparts, American warships found that the slave trade was increasing, becoming better organised, and originated from New York. But combined with their suspicion of the British, the stage was set for a renewed conflict with their nominal allies along the West African coast. The American deployment South lagged behind the British because of the earlier legal and naval re-enforcement problems that curtailed US naval activities. The British operated farther South and had a base at St. Helena. Logistics were easier, while the Americans were forced to operate a long supply line from Porto Praia.

In the immediate wake of favourable court decisions, several US officers along the West African coast showed initiative, beyond commercial objectives, to suppress the slave trade. Nevertheless, British activities outpaced the separate US efforts, leading to

⁴⁷ Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 106-108.

American fear that the prominent Royal Navy would drive Americans from the coast. Commodore Francis H. Gregory, in the sloop *Portsmouth*, took command of the force of five vessels in 1850.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, the *Perry* was on patrol and under the command of Andrew Hull Foote. Gregory took the initiative, deployed the squadron farther South and concentrated efforts along the Bights of Benin and Biafra to disrupt American slave traders that supplied the Brazilian market. But the remote nature of the American supply depot put the squadron at a disadvantage: with only a maximum of three months' provisions, warships would have to sail down the coast and back, then rest at Madeira. He recommended that the depot move to St. Helena or that supply ships be dispatched.⁴⁹ Gregory's March to May cruise illustrates the logistical problems and overall US strategy. It was closest to the coast, while the second, June to August portion, was farther out to sea during the rainy season (figure 7.2).⁵⁰

Gregory's orders to his friend Lieutenant Commander Andrew Hull Foote, another zealous officer, are indicative of Gregory's strategy. On 9 January 1850, Gregory ordered Foote, in the *Perry*, to sail South of the equator to Cape St. Mary's at 13° South. Gregory told him that his purpose was to protect lawful American commerce and stop the US flag from being used by slavers. Foote was to pay particular attention to known slaving ports like Gallinas, Benguela, Loanda, and Ambriz. Gregory had information that Americans might be involved in the slave trade between Cape St. Mary's and Cape Lopez. By 27 April 1850, Foote reported that he had encountered no slavers and the British only captured one during the period.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Foote was committed to the cause.

⁴⁸ *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 13-14, Wm. Ballard Preston to Captain F.H. Gregory, 17 August 1849.

⁴⁹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 108, African Squadron, F.H. Gregory to Wm. Ballard Preston, 26 March 1850.

⁵⁰ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 108, African Squadron, F.H. Gregory to Wm. Ballard Preston, 3 September 1850 and F.H. Gregory to Secretary of the Navy, 14 October 1850.

⁵¹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 108, African Squadron, F.H. Gregory to Lieut. Comdt. A.H. Foot [Foote], 9 January 1850 and Andrew Hull Foote to Commodore Francis H. Gregory, 27 April

This was also an age of moral reform in American society, and the maritime community in particular. It spawned seamen's friends' societies, improvement organisations, and found many advocates in the US Navy.⁵² Andrew Foote was one such man who believed, among other things, in temperance and regular church attendance. Foote's pious beliefs extended to the West African coast, where he hoped to help his fellow man. He supported the American Colonisation Society and, later, exclaimed that Christianity would bring civilisation to the Africans.⁵³ As a result, Foote and the *Perry* made successful slaver seizures. On 6 June 1850, for example, he spotted a suspicious vessel windward off Ambriz and sent a boat to investigate. The vessel was the *Martha* from New York and flew the US flag. Her captain later explained that he believed that the *Perry* was a British vessel, as he had information that the *Perry* was no longer on that part of the coast. Foote seized the ship at 6 P.M. and her captain exclaimed that if the *Perry* had failed to seize her, he was ready to load a cargo of slaves and leave the African coast. Foote sent her to New York for trial. The US District Court at New York condemned the vessel; the captain skipped bail, while the mate was sentenced to two years in prison. But the Secretary of the Navy, William Ballard Preston, from Virginia, had little to say about Foote's actions and simply noted approval.⁵⁴ Preston was a known advocate of Jefferson's philosophy of the gradual elimination of slavery, rather than radical abolition.⁵⁵

1850.

⁵² Harold D. Langley *Social Reform in the United States Navy, 1798-1862* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 44-66.

⁵³ Spencer C. Tucker, *Andrew Foote: Civil War Admiral on Western Waters* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 55-60 and 68. For details on Foote's beliefs in temperance, see Tucker, 39-51.

⁵⁴ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 108, African Squadron, Andrew H. Foote to Commodore Francis H. Gregory, 7 June 1850; Andrew H. Foote, *Africa and the American Flag* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854), 287-293; and NA, RG 45, Secretary of the Navy Confidential Letters, Mar. 1, 1849 to Feb. 28, 1853, no. 2, Wm. Ballard Preston to Commodore Gregory, 9 July 1850.

⁵⁵ Harold D. Langley, "William Ballard Preston," in Coletta, (ed.), *American Secretaries of the Navy*, vol. 1, 243.

In July 1850, Millard Fillmore became president after the death of Zachary Taylor. Fillmore was from New York and supported the navy. His administration also supported limited naval expansion and exploration squadrons, such as Matthew Perry's mission to Asia.⁵⁶ But the President also wished to preserve the Union and he respected States' rights. At the urging of Southerners, Fillmore selected William A. Graham, from North Carolina, as Secretary of the Navy.⁵⁷ By May 1851, Graham ordered Commodore Eli A. F. Lavallette to relieve Commodore Gregory. Despite the lofty goals of some Americans, others, like Lavallette, believed that the slave trade was suppressed North of Cape Palmas. He also believed that the British had enough steamers in the Bight of Biafra to suppress the remaining trade. Meanwhile, Lavallette exclaimed, there was never any slave trade carried on North of Liberia, and little American commerce. The US needed to move its base to St. Helena, as the squadron had been deployed as far South as possible to St. Paul de Loanda. It had protected commerce, American citizens and settlers, and Lavallette believed it helped suppress the slave trade.⁵⁸

John P. Kennedy, from a wealthy Baltimore merchant family, replaced Graham when the latter decided to run for Vice President. Kennedy also believed in the potential for African economic expansion and dispatched Commander William F. Lynch to survey the coast from Liberia to the Gaboon. Kennedy hoped Congress would provide more money for the service, but Congress disagreed. The survey mission was at the behest of the Pennsylvania branch of the American Colonisation Society, and Congress increasingly feared the divisive issue of slavery, regardless of the survey's mission.

⁵⁶ Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire*, 95-99.

⁵⁷ Harold D. Langley, "William Alexander Graham," in Coletta, (ed.), *American Secretaries of the Navy*, vol. 1, 257.

⁵⁸ *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 14-16, William A. Graham to Commodore Eli A. F. Lavallette, May 1851 and NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 109, African Squadron, Eli A. F. Lavallette to William A. Graham, 20 May 1851, Eli A. F. Lavallette to William A. Graham, 13 November 1851 and E.A.F. Lavallette [c. February 1853].

Focussed on commerce promotion, Kennedy believed that if the squadron was intended only for slave trade suppression, perhaps it should be disbanded.⁵⁹

On 9 December 1852, he ordered Commodore Isaac Mayo, who would be in command about two years, to relieve Lavallette. Mayo's force was smaller than Lavallette's, and yet he was expected to cover the same territory. Meanwhile, Washington's commitment, by 1853, declined further. President Franklin Pierce advocated a strong foreign policy, but also wished to avoid the contentious slavery issue, again strengthening the squadron's resolve only on commerce protection and development. In turn, Mayo expressed his angst that the squadron had only three or four vessels to patrol the coast. The warships thus passed "singly, from point to point in succession, and two of them rarely meet." It was "a force very inadequate" for the government's task.⁶⁰ But focussed on trade, with little will in Washington or on station to suppress the slave trade, American officers were concerned that Britain was achieving a dominance over Americans along the African coast. It interfered with the long-term American goal and touched on sensitivities that all at home could agree upon. In turn, British exacerbation at increasing American involvement in the slave trade combined to generate tension between them that had to be relieved or face war.

British Dominance and American Decline

The Americans observed British actions both in support of their trade policy and against American-flagged vessels the British suspected of involvement in the slave trade. By the 1850s, US Navy officers not only feared the impact of British warships on US trade, but also that her merchants, and newly established steam lines, were agents of imperialistic control. The Americans found that US traders were scarce along many

⁵⁹ Harold D. Langley, "John Pendleton Kennedy," in Coletta, (ed.), *American Secretaries of the Navy*, vol. 1, 269-271.

⁶⁰ *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 16, John P. Kennedy to Commodore Isaac Mayo, 9 December 1852; Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire*, 117-128; and NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 29 September 1854.

parts of the African coast, while those regions had ample British mercantile representation. The Americans believed that it was the presence of the Royal Navy and the regular use of steam technology in the private sector that gave the British an advantage over their American counterparts. To suspicious American observers, the British, her navy, colonial officials, and merchants – the gentlemanly capitalists – were achieving their goals.

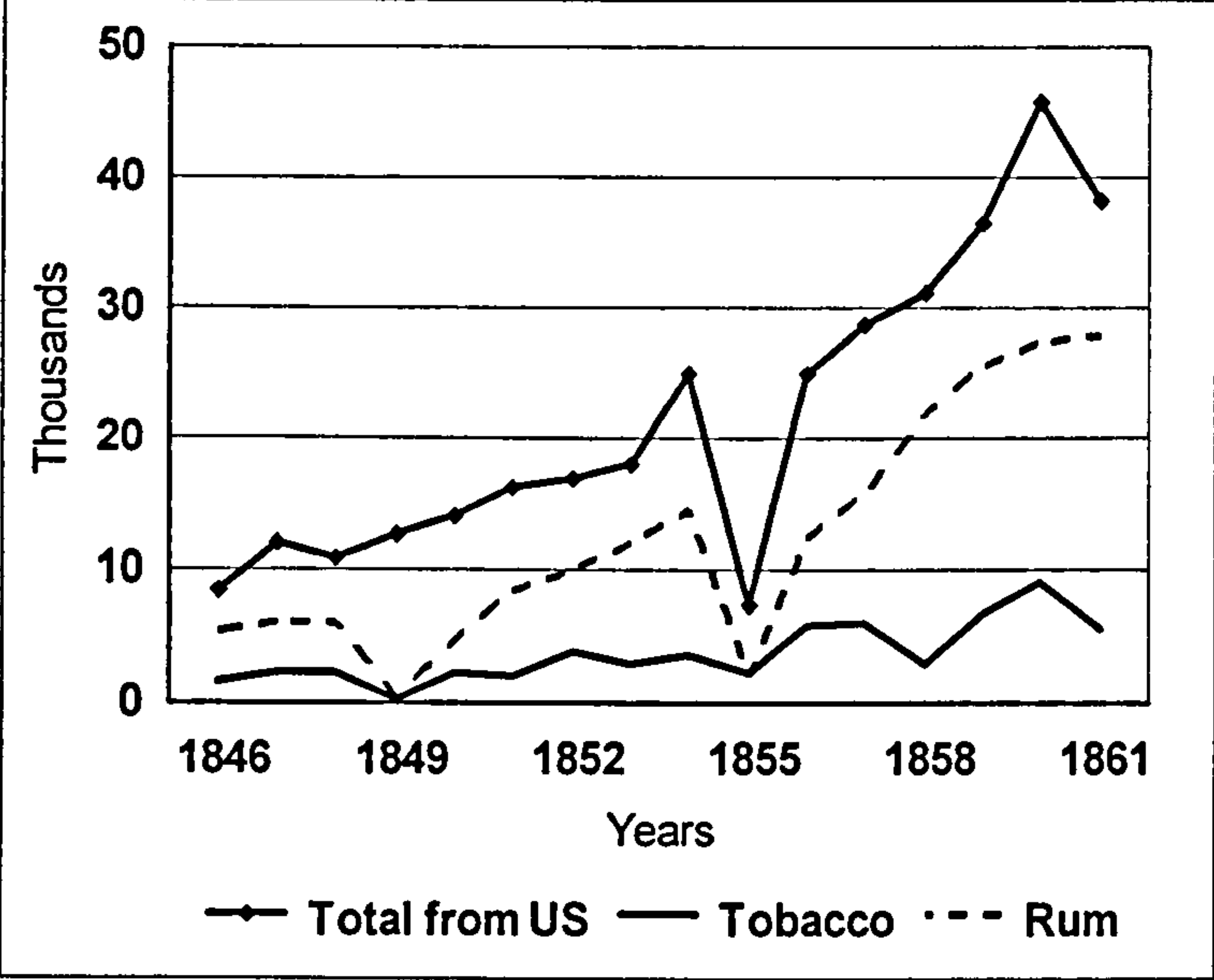
Early in the history of Anglo-American shipping competition, cheaply built American wooden ships threatened to outpace their British counterparts. But Britain took advantage of iron and steam technologies to outstrip Americans in carrying capacity and trade routes. The result was that Britain enjoyed a grasp on shipping that became unmatched by other nations. World-wide in 1850, the British owned 52% of steam tonnage, while the Americans only twenty-two percent.⁶¹ Freer trade thus allowed Britain to acquire cheap resources, export to countries under lower tariffs, and maintain dominance with her industrial and shipping capacity. All Britain had to worry about was protecting trade from predators and “subsidised” products like slave-produced goods.

Although the African coast was favoured by the East India Company because they could ship goods to and from India without transshipment through hostile territory, steam lines took awhile to be established along the African coast. Early steam engines were large with low-pressure boilers, and they consumed large amounts of coal. The technology, while increasing speed, posed logistical problems. Headrick concluded that “at sea they had to either bring along an enormous supply of coal or be supplied by sailing ships.”⁶² But Kubicek discovered that British colonial officials clamoured for steamers. They believed that it would increase colonial commerce, in particular with inland regions, and would increase the prestige of colonial officials in African and European eyes. The establishment of regular steam communication also allowed the

⁶¹ S.G. Sturme, *British Shipping and World Competition* (University of London: The Athlone Press, 1962), 1, 9 and 12-14; and Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare*, 15-16 and 35-36.

⁶² Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 131-133.

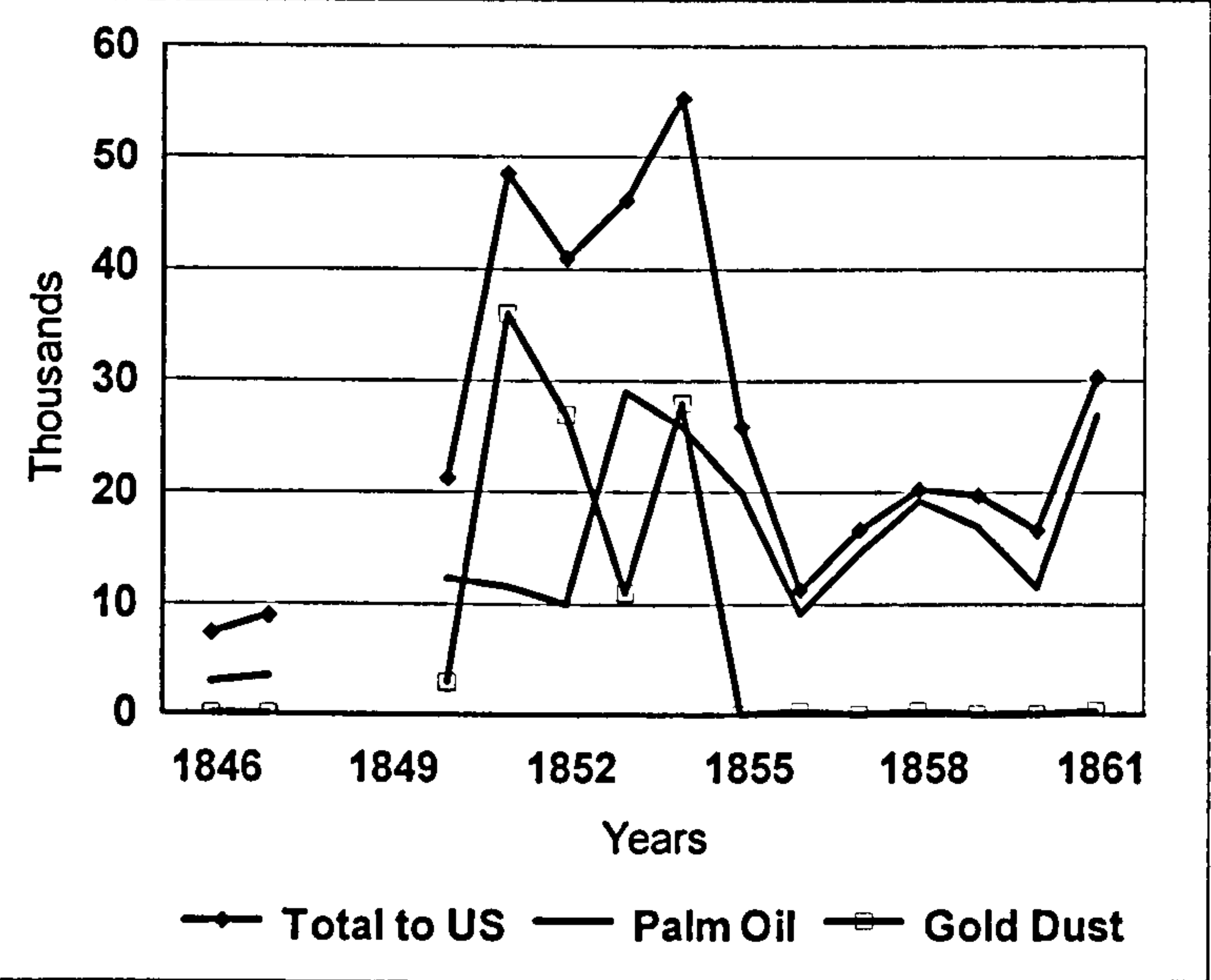
Figure 7.3 US Exports to the Gold Coast (£ thousands), 1846-1861



Source: Calculated from Brooks, *Yankee Traders*, Appendix G, “Value of Gold Coast Imports, 1846-1885 (in sterling),” 309.

Note: Total US Exports also include lumber and cotton goods from 1856, valued only about £500 per annum. Flour exports were also present, but ranged between £500 and £2000 per annum. Because of the low values, these items were omitted from this graph.

Figure 7.4 US Imports from the Gold Coast (£ thousands), 1846-1861



Source: Calculated from Brooks, *Yankee Traders*, Appendix H, “Value of Gold Coast Exports, 1846-1885 (in sterling),” 310.

Note: Gaps represent missing data from Brooks’ table. Import total also includes ivory (highest from about £300 to £6000 per annum) and gum copal (highest from about £300 to £5000 per annum). Because of the low values and sporadic nature of their presence, these items were omitted from this graph.

British better control over supply and demand; it increased efficiency, and allowed a broader spectrum of British merchants to operate.⁶³ The competitive advantage threatened to drive American traders from the region.

Table 7.1 Import Sources, Africa and Canada, £

Years	Africa	Canada
1844-6	2,898,000	5,559,000
1854-6	5,218,000	5,740,000

Source: Davis, *Industrial Revolution*, Table 40, Imports (£000), 93.

As discussed in Chapter Two, African exports to Britain rose during this period, while political leaders like Palmerston adhered to a policy of informal empire and the gentlemanly ethic. African imports had doubled from the period 1844-46 to 1854-56 so much so that Africa now rivalled Canada as a source of primary resources (see table 7.1). In contrast, Africa-America trade, while still rising, was far less. Figure 7.3, illustrates that American exports to the Gold Coast, for example, rarely exceeded £40,000 per year, and were largely composed of rum. Figure 7.4, shows that exports from the region rarely exceeded £50,000 and were largely palm oil and gold dust. They peaked during 1849-1854, but then declined, largely because of the decline in the value of gold dust, possibly as demand for the commodity dried up with greater access to American domestic gold supplies.

The British endeavours, despite their caution, raised American concerns especially when combined with the establishment of regular steam communications between Britain and Africa in the 1850s. The Liverpool African Steamship Company, for example, started mail service in 1852 that went as far South as Fernando Po. Another company, the Iron Steam Ship Company, also established a regular steam line to the African coast by 1853. Previously, Mayo observed, small 5- to 30-ton transient vessels from the United States serviced the coast. But English merchants “now order

⁶³ Robert V. Kubicek, “The Colonial Steamer and the Occupation of West Africa by the Victorian State, 1840-1900,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 18:1 (1990): 9, 12-13, 19, and 21.

them [supplies] from England; calculating almost to an hour, the time when they will be received; the returning steamers enables them to send back at a fixed period the produce of the country that has accumulated in their hands.” Americans were able to compete, but would soon be driven from the region if they were unable to obtain a similar advantage. Mayo concluded that the British government “brought the great motive power of the age, to ... drive all commercial rivals from the field[.]”⁶⁴

Americans perceived the benefits Britain achieved through their presence and use of force against lesser, native, powers, but remained wary. The Americans made trade agreements with the natives that contained pledges of equal access or “free trade,” but they were less extensive than British treaties. Mayo had obtained a trade treaty with the King of Lagos, for example, putting American commerce on an equal footing with that of other nations. But he also knew that Lagos was an important region and Britain had used force to achieve their objectives when treaty talks failed. Even so, when the slave trade in a region was suppressed, Mayo believed that the British continued to use sea power to achieve their overall economic objectives. Mayo correctly surmised the British strategy for the coast and that the British had integrated the US Navy into their strategic plan. Probably because of the growing crisis with Russia and the Crimean War, Mayo observed that the British had reduced their fleet along the coast and offered no objection to the Americans securing trade access.⁶⁵

Mayo told Washington that “[t]he willingness with which the British Consul encouraged the King to take this step [the agreement with the Americans], probably sprung from” strategic considerations that resulted from their reduced naval commitment. But he warned that “[t]his [Lagos] is one of the most important commercial points on the West Coast of Africa & the English Government seem to be

⁶⁴ Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, 203 and NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 31 July 1854, I. Mayo to [Secretary of the Navy], 22 August 1853, and I. Mayo to [Secretary of the Navy], 22 August 1853.

⁶⁵ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 9 August 1854 and I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 9 August 1854.

fully alive to the fact.” Lagos was thriving, by 1854 had a population of 18,000, “and must from its position become the centre of a very valuable trade.” Mayo thus believed that the King’s pledge to the Americans might prove useful if the French or British “should at any time attempt to obtain exclusive [trade] privileges.”⁶⁶ But to American observers, it appeared that the British strategy to push African production factors into legitimate commerce worked to the detriment of American traders.

While other factors undoubtedly contributed to the stagnation of African-American trade, Mayo’s remarks also correspond with the period of sharp decline in American exports to Africa, and African imports to America (see figures 7.3 and 7.4). In response to British advances Mayo advocated a “line of steamers between Africa, and one of our Southern ports” to regain the trade that “in its infancy was fast falling into our hands when the foresight of the British ... snatched it from us[.]” Moreover, by 1855, Commodore Thomas Crabbe, Mayo’s replacement, feared that the British would even drive Americans out of their original colonies at Liberia. He told Washington that the French and British treaties “are said to grant to the subjects of those countries equal rights in trade with the citizens of the Republic” of Liberia. Many in Liberia disliked those provisions but “England, however, appears to be well established in the affections of Liberia, and will not patiently yield to any [treaty] alternation” adverse to her trade.⁶⁷

The level of British interest and development along West Africa from 1850 to 1856 bred suspicions in American officers. While American officers were impressed with the British actions at Lagos, they also believed that the British only allowed them along the coast as part of overall British strategy during the Crimean War. This period is critical in the establishment of *Pax Britannica*: the British achieved regional economic dominance and with the end of the Crimean War they had a global naval force with no

⁶⁶ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 9 August 1854 and Ricd. L. Page to Commo. I. Mayo, 16 June 1854, enclosure in I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 7 July 1854.

⁶⁷ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, I. Mayo to [Secretary of the Navy,] 22 August 1853 and NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 111, African Squadron, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 12 December 1855.

rival. Rather than counter the British along West Africa, the Americans turned increasingly inwards and toward the Pacific. In response to British sea power, Andrew Lambert concluded that after 1856 the United States, and other nations, realised that efforts were futile and they “abandoned all pretence at deep water capacity in favour of coast defence, shore batteries and monitors[.]”⁶⁸

Furthermore, Anglo-American tension over slave trade suppression remained. From the British perspective, suspicion about American motives increased as the slave trade continued and American actions stagnated. On 24 October 1853, for example, the British warship *Crane*, off Cabinda, encountered the American-flagged vessel *H.N. Gambrill*. The British were suspicious, inspected her on 28 October, but released her again. That evening, the *Crane* came upon the US warship *Constitution* with Commodore Mayo on board, and provided him with information about the *H.N. Gambrill*. Rear Admiral Bruce told London that the information then led to Mayo capturing the vessel fifteen miles from the Congo. But Bruce felt that the *H.N. Gambrill* had almost escaped because it raised the US flag. He told London that the *Gambrill*’s master even had the “audacity” to raise the British flag when the American warship approached, and claimed he was a legitimate trader working for “Hatton and Cookson, Liverpool merchants trading at Ambriz.”⁶⁹

By late 1854, British and American warships also observed an increase in American involvement in the slave trade based out of New York and Havana. En route South in late 1854, the US warship *Marion* arrived at Loanda and fell in with the British warship *Philomel*. On 24 October 1854, John M. D. Skene, commanding *Philomel*, reported to the *Marion* the presence of two US-flagged ships in Loanda harbour. They

⁶⁸ Andrew D. Lambert, “The British Naval Strategic Revolution, 1815-1854” in Jackson and Williams, (eds.), *Shipping Technology and Imperialism*, 156-160.

⁶⁹ Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, “Appendix A: Vessels Arrested by Americans Officers for Violation of the Slave-Trade Acts, 1837-1862,” 217; NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 10 November 1853; and Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, 1854, vol. LXXIII, 201, no. 140, H.W. Bruce to Secretary of the Admiralty, 10 January 1854.

were the *Wild Pigeon* and the *Oxford*, manned with foreign crews. The former, from New York, had arrived on 7 October with a consignment for a known slave trader, Francisco Antonio Flores, whom the British had called on locals to expel. The *Oxford* was from New London and one of Skene's officers had boarded her off St. Helena, and found her "partly equipped for the slave trade[.]" Skene provided intelligence about the vessels to the *Marion* so that the latter's commander could take such steps as needed to stop the abuse of the American flag.⁷⁰

Conditioned by a fear of increased British control of the region, the Americans eyed British actions with suspicion. Commander H.Y. Purviance told Commodore Mayo that he met Skene in person to discuss the matter and then sent one of his men to inspect the vessels, but found no cause to detain them. Instead, Purviance remarked that "I am perfectly satisfied myself that both vessels were engaged in lawful trade." He took the word of the *Oxford's* master that the extra water casks were for transporting palm oil and whiskey. The American officers concluded that the British must simply have concluded that the *Oxford* was involved in the slave trade purely because she was an American ship.⁷¹ Regardless of the outcome, it was clear that over this period American involvement in the slave trade appeared to be increasing from the British perspective. But their combined scepticism kept Anglo-American relations cool.

Commodore Thomas Crabbe, who relieved Mayo in 1855, was the last US West African commodore before the next Anglo-American crisis developed.⁷² During his tenure, the squadron focussed on commerce and colonial protection. But he was reluctant to undertake slave trade suppression and quickly asked to be relieved of

⁷⁰ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, H.Y. Purviance to I. Mayo, 30 November 1854, I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 7 February 1855, John M.D. Skene to the Commander of the United States Corvette Marion, 24 October 1854, enclosure in I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 7 February 1855.

⁷¹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 110, African Squadron, H.Y. Purviance to I. Mayo, 30 November 1854, enclosure in I. Mayo to J.C. Dobbin, 7 February 1855.

⁷² *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 16-20, J.C. Dobbin to Captain Thomas Crabbe, 17 April 1855; and NA, RG 45, Secretary of the Navy Confidential Letters, Feb. 1, 1853 to Oct. 17, 1857, J.C. Dobbin to Captain Thomas Crabbe, "Confidential" 3 April 1855.

command.⁷³ During a cruise down the African coast to Whydah and Princes Island, from December 1855 to early January 1856, Crabbe observed no slavers even in the notorious Whydah and Bight of Benin.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, he observed changes in British deployment, and by February 1857, he made a startling discovery: the slave trade was continuing in a conspiracy centred on Havana and managed from New York.

During the investigation into the suspicious vessel *Flying Eagle*, Crabbe discovered papers that indicated there was a slave trade conspiracy “carried on to some extent by an organised company” of New York and Havana residents. For example, the brig *P. Soule* delivered 479 slaves from the Benguela coast to Havana by February 1856. Crabbe concluded that American-flagged vessels involved in the slave trade were Portuguese owned, sailed from New York, manned largely by foreigners, and covered by dubious American citizenship papers.⁷⁵ Furthermore, in mid-1856, Crabbe noted that within one week thirteen British war steamers had passed through the area, “bound for the West Indies.”⁷⁶ Unbeknownst to Crabbe, the British warships were headed to the West Indies because of the activities of private citizens waging private wars in the Gulf and Central America. It was only a matter of time before more complaints arrived from US-flagged vessels of British “interference” in more sensitive American home waters.

Conclusion

The US Navy focussed on commerce protection and promotion along the West African coast. Slave trade suppression was a separate issue that rarely entered the equation. The

⁷³ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 111, African Squadron, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 18 April 1855, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 8 June 1855, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 9 July 1855, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 26 July 1855, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 7 August 1855, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin 2 October 1855 with Secretary’s hand-written notation of 30 October 1855, and Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 25 February 1856.

⁷⁴ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 111, African Squadron, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 21 January 1856.

⁷⁵ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 111, African Squadron, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 21 January 1856 and 14 February 1857.

⁷⁶ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 111, African Squadron, Thomas Crabbe to J.C. Dobbin, 30

Mexican-American War, legal restraints, and the squadron's primary duty curtailed slaver seizures. Instead, the squadron collected commercial intelligence and revenged attacks on Americans. Because of discouragement at home, only zealous officers like Andrew Hull Foote, pursued slave trade suppression with any vigour. But American officers also watched British advancements, caused by the unified nature of British strategy, with suspicion. In turn, Britons looked upon American inaction with dismay. Consequently, the separate goals, strategy and tactics of the Royal Navy and US Navy threatened Anglo-American relations as each questioned the sincerity of the other. Yet, rather than go to war, their shared belief that sea power could be used to further long-term objectives "peacefully" – at least with other nation-states – provided a mechanism through which they could relate. They maintained their commitment to their interests, co-operated when goals overlapped, and modified their use of sea power when objectives clashed. In this way, sea power allowed the Anglo-American relationship to be dynamic even when their interests clashed.

Chapter Eight: Conflict Avoidance in the Equatorial Atlantic

Britain and America deployed naval forces to the West African coast, but divergent policies often interfered with each other and generated tension. Britain combined slave trade suppression, economic, and strategic policies. In contrast, the United States kept slave trade suppression and commerce protection separate. The contrasting policies brought them into conflict as continued American involvement in the slave trade threatened British goals and Americans feared that London meant to dominate and secure African trade for herself. But the role of sea power in furthering long-term goals “peacefully,” without war with other nation-states, provided a mechanism through which Britain and America could prevent tensions from spiralling into war. By modifying their naval policies, sea power provided a safety valve that could be adjusted to preserve relations, a balance of power, and commercial endeavours.

Several interrelated cases in the equatorial Atlantic illustrate how Britain and America dissipated tension by controlling their use of sea power. To reduce the chances of conflict, they kept most of their slave trade suppression focussed on the West African coast, away from their sensitive commercial traffic in the Western equatorial Atlantic. They tried to co-operate by sharing intelligence, rather than making questionable searches of vessels flying dubious flags. Moreover, when conflict arose, both remained calm and censured overzealous naval officers, making them “scapegoats” to preserve relations. Such sensitivity was particularly important in the Western equatorial Atlantic. Here, US interests in connecting her East and West coasts through the Central American isthmus were paramount.

Close to home waters, Americans saw little difference in the Royal Navy searching US-flagged ships for slavers or filibusters, private citizens waging an expansive war against Cuba and Central America. Rather than risk war, London acquiesced to American sensitivities and modified British naval policy accordingly. Rather than continue forceful actions against the slave trade, that might drive places like

Cuba into American hands, the Royal Navy patrolled for filibusters and London reined in naval officers and disavowed the forceful actions of British representatives. The government would not let Northern abolitionists drag the country into war over slave trade suppression close to American waters. London showed restraint.

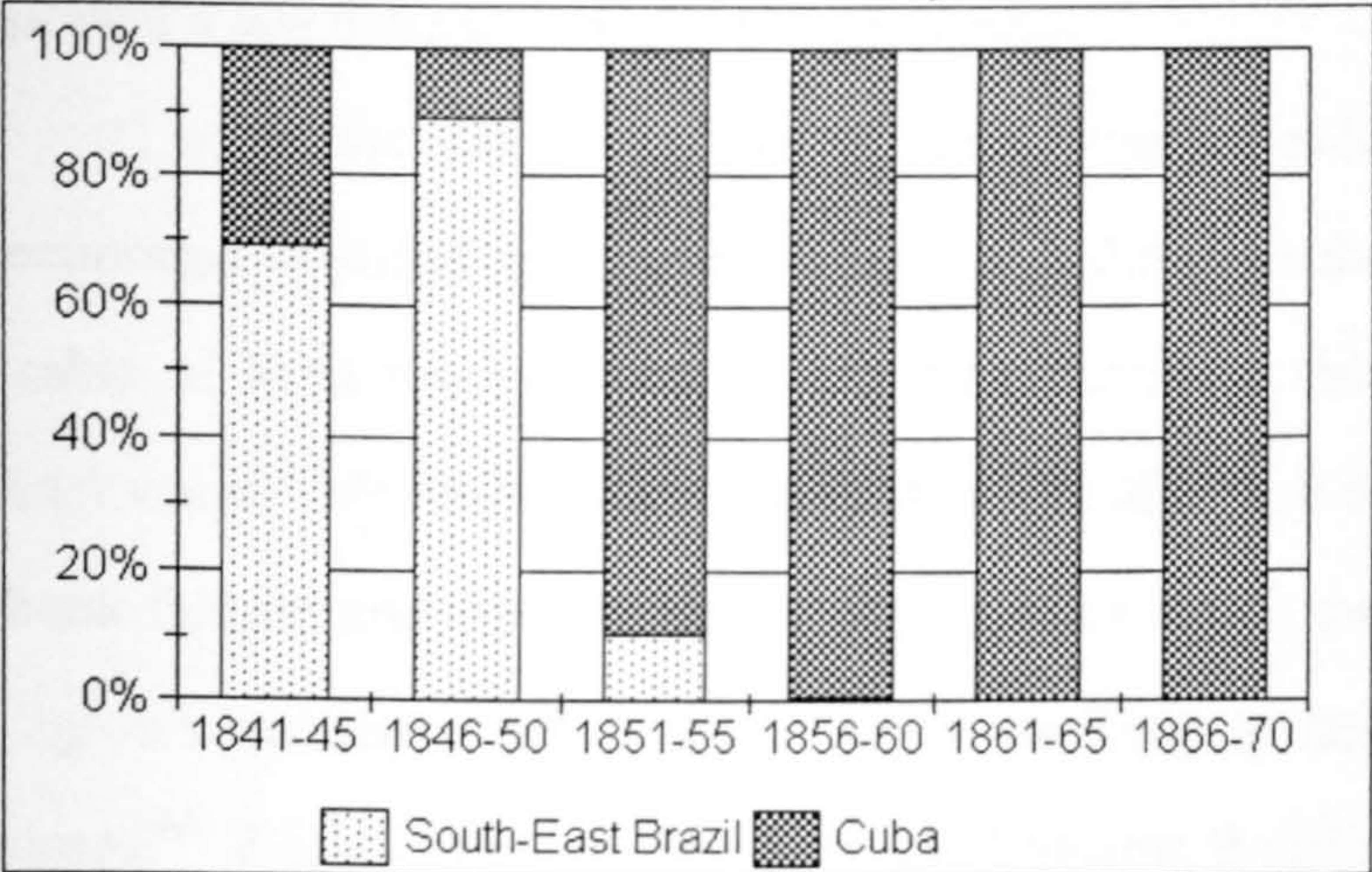
In turn, Washington, for the sake of peaceful co-existence and development, eventually condemned filibuster activities and dispatched naval forces to stop them. By 1859, under continued British and domestic pressure, the United States deployed a steamer force to patrol Cuba for filibusters, slavers, and protect US interests; another force would do the same off West Africa. In the end, with slavery a Civil War rallying cry in the North, Washington gave Britain the right to search suspected US slavers, but London remained wary of being dragged into the Civil War. Finally, to avoid any future conflict on the application of sea power, both nations agreed on passports for vessels involved in legitimate transport of Africans. Across the equatorial Atlantic, the role of peacetime sea power to foster long-term interests allowed Anglo-American naval relations to be a mechanism to reduce tensions and further separate interests. Anglo-American naval relations in the equatorial Atlantic reveal that their relationship was pliable as neither wanted war.

Britain, America, and Patrols from the Eastern Atlantic

The Royal Navy, even after the 1820s piracy crisis, operated in the Western equatorial Atlantic. But even there London wanted peace maintained; the £10 million in investments in South America was the most important consideration. Captains were warned to be careful of taking sides in disputes, or using too much force, "so as not to be seen as agents of British commercial bullying." Thus, "gunboat diplomacy" was rare with the exceptions of the occupation of the Falkland Islands (1832), Malvinas (1833), and against the Brazilian slave trade. Instead, the British used sea power largely to uphold gentlemanly ideals: "to secure a bank's assets, to dissuade the patriots from making a forced levy on British merchants, or to protect a customs house against

interference.” Gough concludes that “in Latin American affairs, H.M. warships were a symbol of security to nervous merchants and anxious creditors.”¹

Figure 8.1 Relative Slave Destinations, Southeast Brazil and Cuba, 1841-1870



Source: Calculated from Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade: A Database*.

Note: Total percentage also includes other regions that were of such small percentages that they failed to appear on the graph and were thus omitted.

Off Brazil, the Royal Navy had some success against the slave trade, stopping 11 slavers from December 1835 to April 1839. But the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Minto, exclaimed to Parliament in 1838 that further efforts were futile without greater naval force or better anti-slave trade treaties.² In 1845, Parliament gave the government the power to act against a Brazil that had “never lifted a finger to enforce her own laws against the slave trade[.]”³ Meanwhile, Don Pacifico, in Greece had his house destroyed in an anti-Semitic attack in 1847 and claimed British citizenship; the Royal Navy blockaded Piraeus in January 1850. Palmerston accepted French mediation, rather than go to war, while Parliament generally condemned Palmerston’s actions. But he had public support with his proclamation that the English government would protect

¹ Barry M. Gough, “Sea Power and South America: The “Brazils” or South American Station of the Royal Navy 1808-1837,” *American Neptune* 50:1 (1990): 29-31.

² Leslie Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question 1807-1869* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 150.

³ Harmon, “Suppress and Protect,” 145-155; Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, 165; and Bethell, *Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, 242-266.

her subjects anywhere.⁴ Lloyd concluded that with renewed gusto Palmerston prosecuted the Brazilian slave trade. By June 1850, the British entered Brazilian ports and seized suspected slavers. On 4 September 1850, the Brazilians capitulated and passed a law deeming the slave trade as piracy.⁵

After the abolition of slavery in the West Indies in the early 1830s, the region's economic importance to Britain began to decline. Lambert concludes that "the falling value of local produce were rapidly transforming it from an economic motor into a backwater." Meanwhile, the combined weight of British sugar duty reform, West Indian bank failures and the desertion of sugar estates during the 1840s, further weakened the region's economy and London "would do little to help, simply waiting for better times."⁶ While London took a firm stand against Brazil, the commercial sector feared disruption of trade, and radicals like Cobden remained amicable toward America. British free trade fuelled the demand for cheap Cuban sugar in the 1840s, and increased the Cuban slave trade. But David R. Murray concluded that Britain was more cautious with Cuban than Brazilian strategy for fear that "British intervention in Cuba could lead to what no British government wanted – the American annexation of the island."⁷

The Monroe Doctrine professed that the Western Atlantic was American and other powers interfered at their peril. But after the 1820s piracy crisis, the Americans offered few objections to the presence of the Royal Navy and British settlements near American home waters. After American strategic interests shifted to their West Coast, their interest grew in Central America as a faster transit point between the Atlantic and Pacific. This interest put the Americans in conflict with British holdings in the region. The British had several early settlements in Central America, in particular the Mosquito

⁴ Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston*, 72-74.

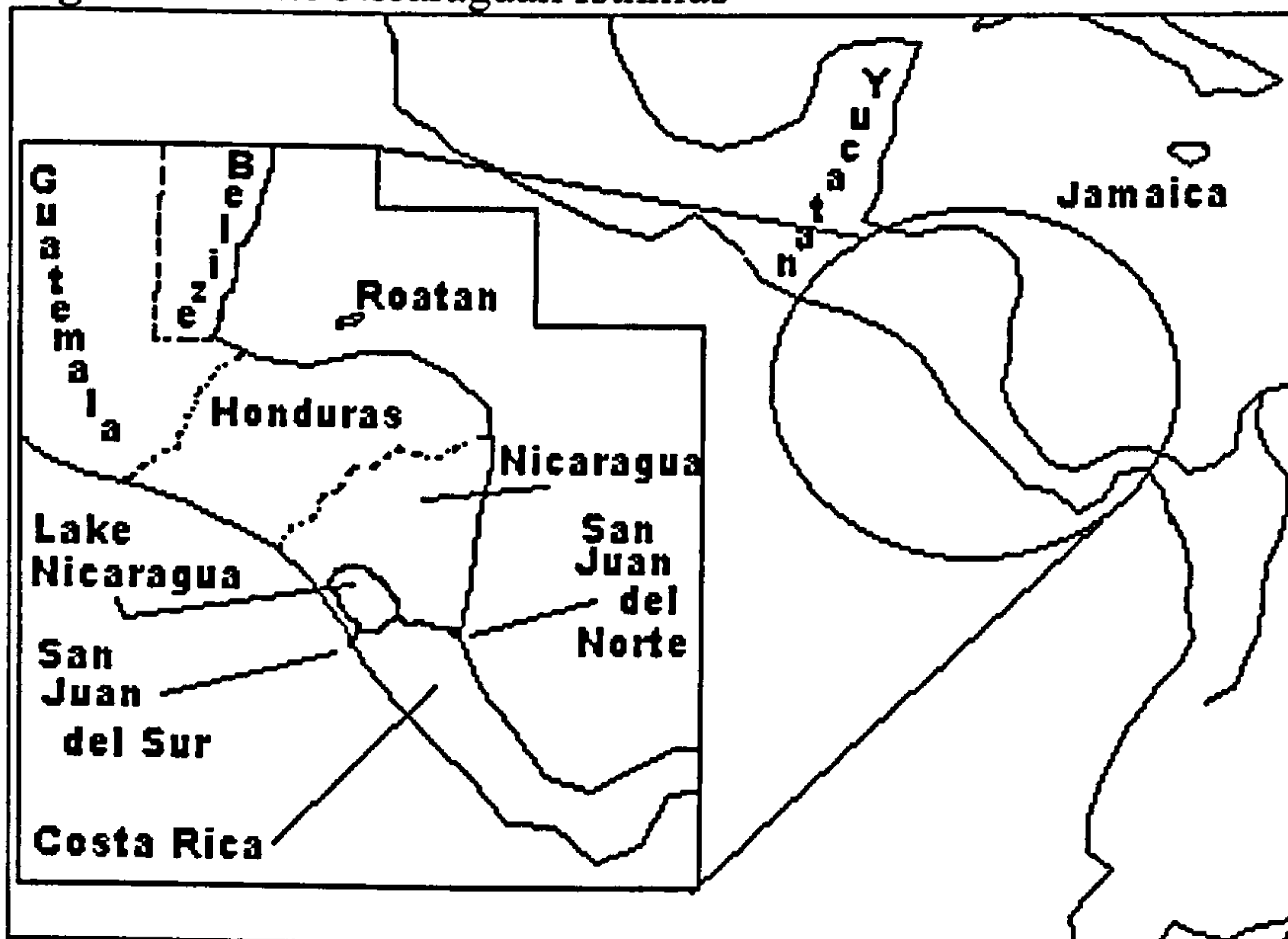
⁵ Klein, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 190 and Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 139-148. See also, Bethell, *Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, 327-363.

⁶ Lambert, *Trincomalee*, 48-49.

⁷ Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 208.

Coast and Belize; both later significant because they commanded potential isthmian routes between the Atlantic and Pacific.⁸ Allen concluded that many disputes touched closely, in terms of geography, more on America than Britain. He opined that from 1847 to 1861, Anglo-American tensions centred mainly on Central America and control of the isthmus.⁹ But rather than go to war the British and Americans settled their problems in the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty (1850) whereby each party agreed not to colonise any transit zone; their navies patrolled the peace for those who might upset the deal.

Figure 8.2 The Nicaraguan Isthmus



Source: Base map from *AGIS 1.62*.

Note: Locations and boundaries are approximate and not necessarily indicative of historical boundaries.

London was only concerned about its sovereignty in the transit zone if it was threatened by other nations. London sought a negotiated settlement over the status of the Belize settlement, first with Spain who had nominal sovereignty over the territory, and then with the new Central American states when they encroached on areas settled by

⁸ Mary Wilhelmine Williams, *Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy, 1815-1915* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., reprint 1965), 28-36.

⁹ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 49 and 422-436.

Britons. When the Americans professed concern over the region because of its strategic importance connecting the Atlantic and Pacific, London desired peaceful resolutions to their disputes, rather go to war over a distant settlement. In turn, the Americans reciprocated. While the area was strategically important, Washington realised the benefits to commerce of peaceful resolution of disputes over access.

The main British settlement was Belize, originally settled by British “freebooters” preying on Spanish trade. The Mosquito Coast, nearby, commanded the Atlantic side of the San Juan River that led inland to Lake Nicaragua. Britain gained control of Belize during the European wars, but by the Treaty of Amiens (27 March 1802), sovereignty was returned to Spain and confirmed by the Treaty of Madrid in 1814. But there were British settlers in Belize, and Spain failed to exercise governance there, a weakness that increased after the Spanish American revolutions. Consequently, Britain exerted practical sovereignty over the region, appointed superintendents accountable to the Governor of Jamaica, but refrained from declaring it an official colony. Nevertheless, British loggers fanned out from the principal settlements into areas unpopulated but for natives.¹⁰

The status quo was satisfactory until Spain lost control of its colonies in the 1820s. The Central American states formed the short-lived United Provinces of Central America (1824), composed of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. As discussed, the United States soon settled its differences with Spain and recognised new Central American states. But Britain wavered; when Canning believed that conditions were ripe to make commercial treaties with new nations like Mexico, they were unable to agree on the status of Belize. Consequently, the 1826 Anglo-Mexican treaty failed to define who controlled the disputed region, Spain, Britain, or Mexico, and Britain continued its *de facto* administration of Belize.¹¹

¹⁰ R.A. Humphreys, *The Diplomatic History of British Honduras, 1638-1901* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 10-17.

¹¹ Humphreys, *British Honduras*, 18-27.

Britain asked Spain on several occasions to formally cede sovereignty over Belize to Britain. In 1835, the Spanish foreign minister, Martínez de la Rosa, agreed verbally to the proposal, but with continued political instability in Spain, talks stalled. Meanwhile, British settlers and companies, such as the Eastern Coast of Central America Commercial and Agricultural Company, based in London, had received land grants from the Guatemalan government in the disputed border region. Nevertheless, the status of British Honduras – Belize – was left unresolved as the Central American nations continued to evolve.¹²

In 1841, Macdonald, British Superintendent of Belize, went to the mouth of the San Juan River, raised the Mosquito flag, and declared the Mosquito Coast a British protectorate, with initial support from London.¹³ Macdonald knew the strategic importance of the region. If another country possessed the Bay Islands, for example, it “would be a death blow to Commerce of British Honduras” in the event of war.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the population had grown from 10,000 in 1835, to 13,000 by the end of the decade. But in London, Palmerston concluded that “the best thing to do was ‘to let the Spaniards forget it.’” His successor, Aberdeen, took the same stand “out of respect for Spain.”¹⁵ It was a quiet policy, so long as British interests could develop in safety.

During the Crimean War, Britain’s ambassador to Washington was expelled for British war recruitment in the United States. Some called for retaliation, but Cabinet continued a conciliatory approach and allowed US Ambassador Dallas to stay in London. Palmerston told Parliament in 1856 that taking a bellicose attitude with the United States was no way to “persuade the American people to cultivate the most

¹² Humphreys, *British Honduras*, 38-46.

¹³ Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 2-25 and 37-42.

¹⁴ PRO, Adm 128/34, pp. 169-170 and 283-291, George Grey, [Under Secretary of State for the Colonies], to John Barrow, 6 August 1835, J. Russell, 3 April 1841, and A. MacDonald to John Russell, January 1841.

¹⁵ Humphreys, *British Honduras*, 43-46.

friendly relations with England[.]”¹⁶ Cabinet even ordered “the naval commander in Central American waters ... to avoid anything that might be construed as provocation.” Palmerston remained inimical toward the United States. Southern slavery still offended him, and even in 1855, he speculated that Britain could defeat the United States. But Steele believed that Palmerston’s bravado was countered with the realisation that there was little support in Britain for war with America. Therefore, Britain adopted a realistic policy toward the United States that led to “acquiescence in the American demand that Britain should retire from her Central American territories with the exception of British Honduras.”¹⁷

After the Crimean War, Britain was wary of war, newspapers urged peace, and Palmerston concluded that Britain and America had “too many interests in common” to go to war.¹⁸ Palmerston felt it was safe to complain to France and the United States about differing interests because the strong commercial ties with those nations would help prevent conflict. He “insisted that Britain should practise an assertive diplomacy while reflecting that for good reasons it would not lead to war with her main rivals.”¹⁹ Palmerston wanted to protect British interests in the British West Indies, but issues away from sensitive British holdings concerned the British public less and less. For example, as another dispute was on the horizon over islands off Vancouver Island in the Pacific Northwest, Argyll told Russell in December 1859 that the public would not support a government in a conflict over “a matter which concerns them so remotely.” Therefore, London also decided to withdraw from its Central American possessions farther away in the disputed isthmus region, although Colonial Secretary Newcastle

¹⁶ Palmerston quoted in Evelyn Ashley, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry John Temple Viscount Palmerston*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley & Sons, 1879), vol. 2, 336-337.

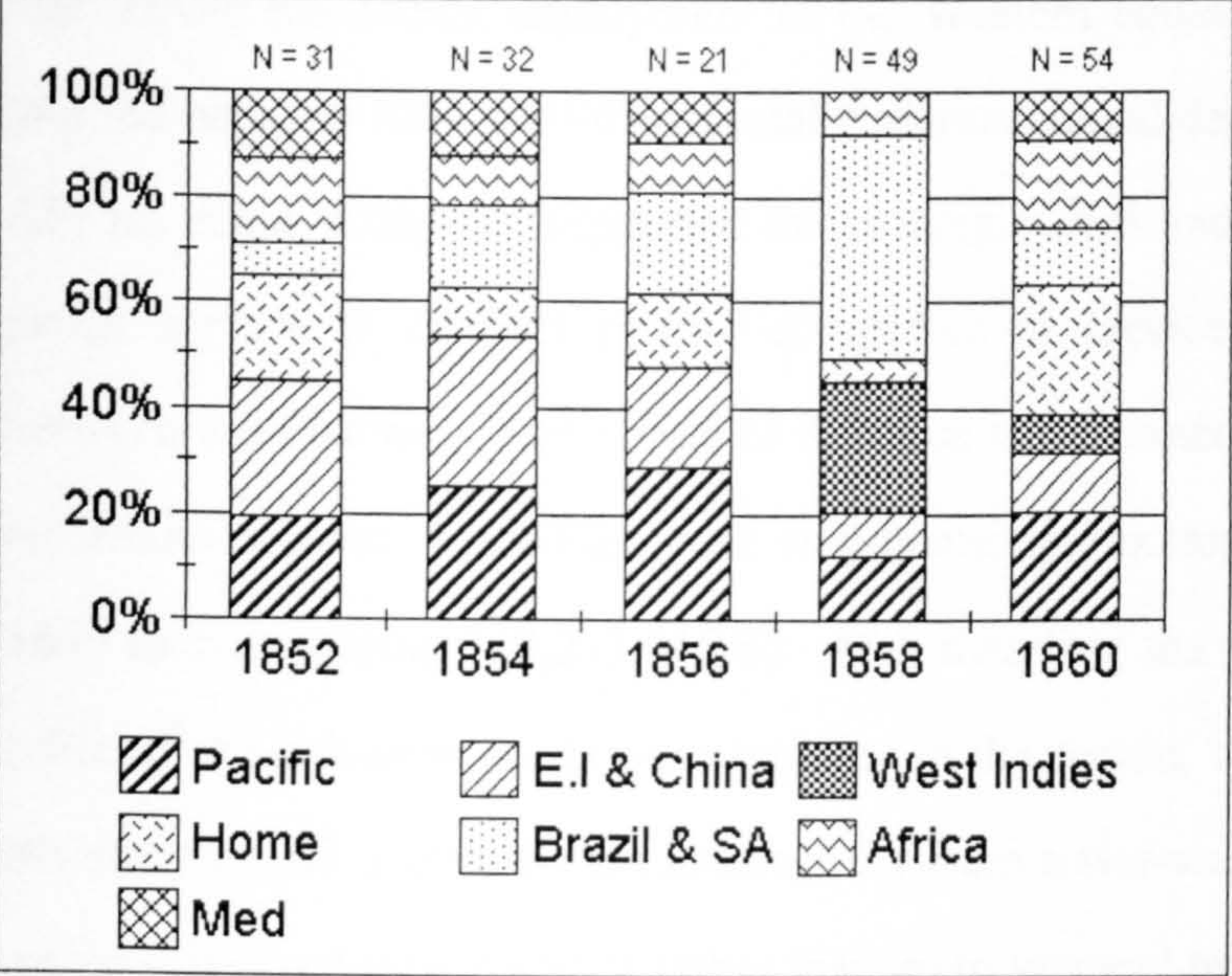
¹⁷ Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, 56-57.

¹⁸ Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 212-223 and 227-266.

¹⁹ Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, 246.

protested on part of the British inhabitants.²⁰

Figure 8.3 US Navy Vessel Deployment, 1852-1860



Source: Calculated from United States, *Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1842-1860.

Note: EI = East Indies; SA = South America.

In contrast, while the era began with American maritime interests focused on foreign trade, coastwise trade grew in importance. With the close of the Mexican-American War, the amount of American coastline interests grew and along with it American shipping, naval interests, and sensitivity to the Central American region. The 1850s marked a significant shift in American strategic outlook. Southern expansionists believed that the Gulf of Mexico and Central America offered a new land where the slave South could expand its power relative to the Northern States. The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations advocated American annexation of the Yucatan and Ambassador James Buchanan advocated American possession of Cuba to counter British commercial influence. Finally, the thought of a lucrative transportation route to the newly acquired Pacific coast attracted American investors and shipping magnates

²⁰ PRO 30/22/25, Russell Papers, Argyll to Russell, 19 and 21 December 1859, quoted in Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, 294.

like Cornelius Vanderbilt, to the isthmus.²¹

US naval deployment reflected this shift in American focus. Figure 8.3 reveals that during the 1850s, deployment in the Western equatorial Atlantic and the Pacific totalled between 70% and 90% of total American naval deployment. In contrast with the African coast, Congress supported this strategic shift and authorised the navy and the postal service to contract private companies to service Oregon. The rise in traffic between the East and West coasts of America was dramatic and epitomised the shifting American interest. West-East gold shipments, for example, rose from \$4,140,200 in 1849 to a staggering \$40,233,915 by 1852, dwarfing the value of American trade with Africa.²² American interests were growing in the region, while London wished to avoid frivolous conflicts over distant holdings far from a war-weary public. Consequently, the nations resolved their disputes rather than go to war and modified their use of sea power to release the tensions that had accumulated between them.

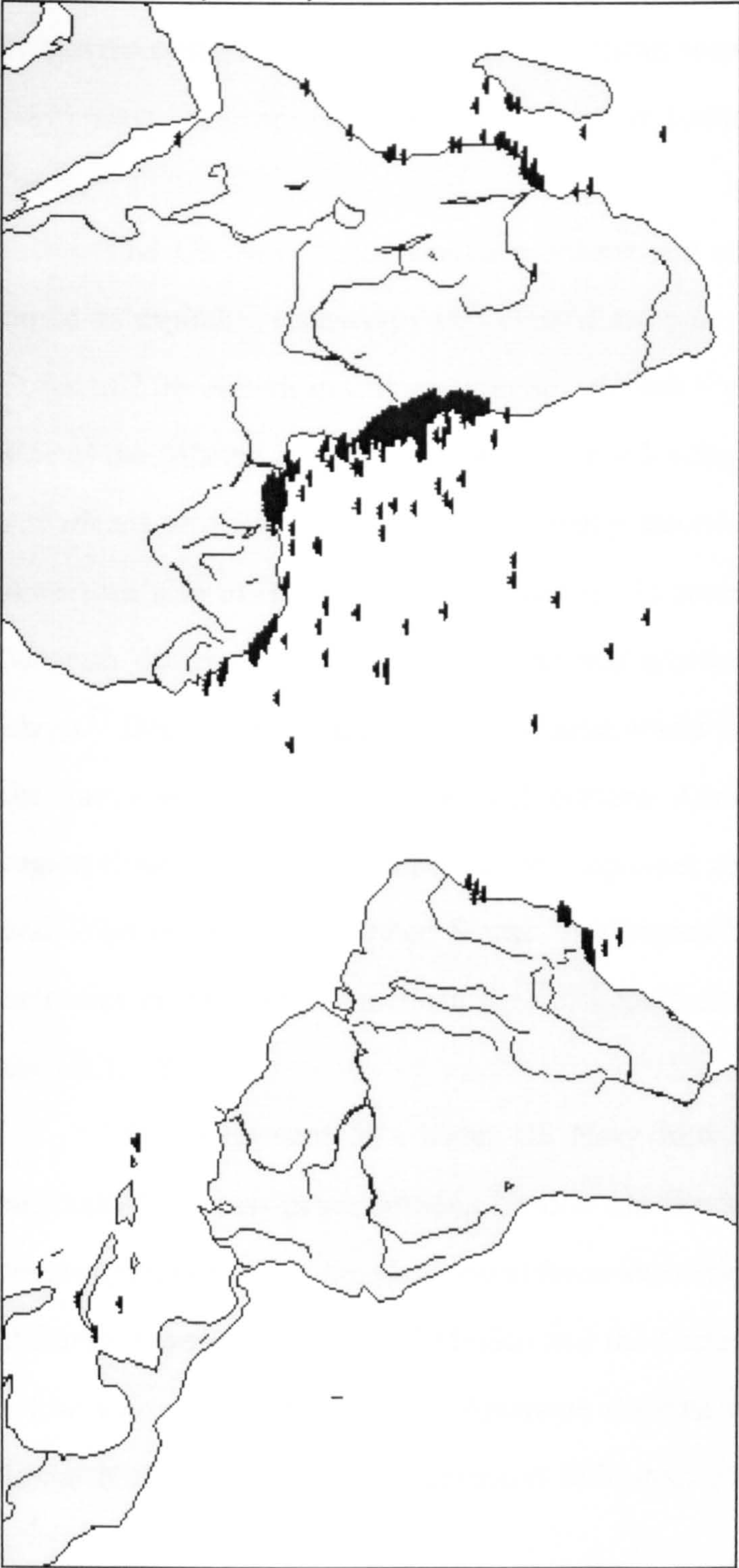
Britain and America believed in the freedom of commerce in the Western equatorial Atlantic and focussed most of their use of sea power along the West African coast during their dispute over slave trade suppression. In 1850, the Admiralty asked its officers for their opinion on the best strategy to stop the slave trade. Hotham, for example, articulately phrased the reason for general British strategy: on the Brazilian side, for instance, it would be difficult to stop a “slaver amongst a herd of [merchant] vessels[.]”²³ Moreover, with the Americans protesting any strong British actions, the Royal Navy was also afraid of sparking a diplomatic incident closer to American interests. Consequently, Lloyd concluded that the British focussed largely on the West

²¹ Charles H. Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 5-6, 16-18 and 29-39.

²² Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, 224.

²³ PRO, Adm 123/173, “Reports from Various Officers as to the Best Means to be adopted for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade. 1850” and Charles Hotham to Sir Francis Baring, March 1850.

Figure 8.4 Royal Navy Slaver Seizures, 1840-1848 and 1855-1864



Source: Britain, *British Sessional Papers*, 1850, vol. LV, 89, and 1861, vol. LXIV, 359; and IUP, vol. 91, "Return of Slave-Vessels Captured by Her Majesty's Ships of War during the Years 1860 to 1864." Plotted using *AGIS 1.62*.

Note: Plots are for slaver seizures for which head money was awarded. Plots also only represent those seizures for which latitude and longitude were given (481 of 794).

African coast, with Denman's strategy of close blockade.²⁴ Thus, Eltis found that 85% of slavers captured were stopped off the African coast.²⁵ Meanwhile, plotting of Royal Navy slaver seizures (see figure 8.4) provides further evidence of the Royal Navy's focus.

The US Navy faced similar problems and reached a similar conclusion. The threat to capitalist endeavours was clear if sea power was too forceful. Andrew Hull Foote told the American Colonisation Society that if patrols were only on the American side of the Atlantic, slavers would scatter once leaving Africa and be hard to find.²⁶ The Americans also had difficulty differentiating slavers and legitimate traders along the American side of the Atlantic. For example, in November 1858, Judge Alexander G. Magrath declared that in such cases he was unable to differentiate legal and illegal cargo.²⁷ Deployment in the Western Atlantic would hurt trade, prolong the suffering of the slaves, and jeopardise international relations. After the Mexican-American War, the region closer to American shores became important strategically for connecting the East and West coasts of the United States. Washington became more sensitive to British activities in the Central American zone that could connect the East and West coasts of the United States.

The deployment of a larger US Navy force in the late 1850s was meant to maintain the uneasy peace between London and Washington over the isthmus and slave trade suppression. The American naval force was divided into two theatres: the Western Atlantic, covering the Gulf of Mexico and the Central American coast, and the West African coast. It was to protect American commerce from undue harassment by the Royal Navy and to intercept American filibusters whom London believed acted as a

²⁴ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 165.

²⁵ Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 100-101.

²⁶ A.H. Foote, *The African Squadron: Ashburton Treaty: Consular Sea Letters* (Philadelphia: William F. Geddes, Printer, 1855), 13.

²⁷ Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 95-100.

prelude to wider American territorial expansion. Still, Americans saw no difference in Britain stopping US-flagged ships for slavers or filibusters, but for the sake of good relations, London accepted the American position on Central America. From 1857, London realised that the Americas were sensitive to the United States; London interfered at her peril.

Naval deployment along West Africa thus suited the goals of both countries. Policing from the African side concentrated the Royal Navy force and prevented interference with the legitimate trade of the Atlantic that could spark conflict with America. Focussed largely on the West African coast, Washington and London sought to reduce and mitigate potential conflicts. The governments preferred squadron commodores who took a calm approach. Those officers who threatened Anglo-American relations were reprimanded, whole ships were recalled, and political overseers on both sides told their navies to maintain good relations with the other for the sake of wider Anglo-American relations.

British Conflict Resolution Strategy

Off West Africa, London sought to avoid conflict with the US Navy to preserve Anglo-American relations and prevent Atlantic-wide war. This objective was clear soon after the Americans established their permanent West African squadron. On 12 December 1843, the Admiralty wrote its squadron about the 1842 treaty and provided guidelines. The squadrons were to share intelligence and join each other when they stopped vessels of any flag. But if a suspicious vessel flew the American flag, even if it carried slaves, then the Royal Navy was forbidden to interfere. They could only detain such a vessel with the co-operation of the US Navy. If a ship proved to be American, the squadron was to report the incident to London immediately.²⁸ The goal of the treaty was to

²⁸ *H.R.Doc. No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 22-24, G. Cockburn and W.H. Gage to Captain John Foote, 12 December 1843.

preserve Anglo-American relations through protocols that governed the use of sea power.

The maturation of Britain's conflict avoidance strategy, as applied to naval relations, is illustrated best during the command of Sir Charles Hotham, from 1846 to 1849. Hotham, selected because of his diplomatic reputation, told Lord Auckland that "an angry shot or a blow here may in spite of both governments [French and British] bring us into war." Therefore, he would not provoke the French "consciously" but would "do my duty, giving praise where it is due, & throwing blame on the shoulders of those [British officers] who merit it."²⁹ Hotham also hoped to placate other countries to reduce tension, and told his officers that if any nation objected to British searches, the British were to deny any deliberate interference in trade.³⁰

Auckland confirmed that Hotham was "right in repressing your officers in the instances in which they have committed acts of haste and indiscretion[.]"³¹ The Royal Navy was to carry out its duties, but reprimand officers who threatened wider diplomatic relations. Hotham confided to Commander Dunlop that London's goal was to remain at peace with all her "allies" while carrying out their tasks. Hotham warned that "[i]f they [any country] have violated any treaty then it becomes an affair between the two govt & with which we as naval officers have no concern."³² The British applied this concept to Anglo-American relations along both sides of the Atlantic, and the Americans reciprocated. In London, for example, with unease in 1848 Europe, Lord

²⁹ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/8, Sir Charles Hotham, Letter Books, Charles Hotham to Earl of Auckland, 25 September 1847.

³⁰ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/11, Sir Charles Hotham, Secret Letter Book, Charles Hotham to Commander Moneypenney, 26 August 1848.

³¹ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/2, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Auckland, Lord Auckland to Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, 20 December 1847.

³² BJL Archives, DDHO 10/11, Sir Charles Hotham, Secret Letter Book, Charles Hotham to Commander Dunlop, 28 May 1848.

Dundas feared a general war. He warned that “we may keep out of it[,]” but “when ever [sic] a shot is fired – we ought to be well prepared – on both sides of the Atlantic.”³³

Anglo-American Co-operation off West Africa, 1840s and 1850s

Britain defined its strategy, applied it to Anglo-American relations, and hoped for co-operation with the United States to further objectives and reduce tension. Both Britain and the United States believed that sea power could further long-term goals, but they used their navies differently, and co-operative efforts were limited. The US Navy protected American interests off West Africa while the Royal Navy combined slave trade suppression, commercial objectives, and countering the French. The effect of the difference was clear to Perry. He told Commodore John Foote, Royal Navy, on 20 May 1844, that his squadron was small, had other duties, a large cruising ground, and joint cruising would be “less effective than might be desired.”³⁴

Four of the Perry brothers had fought in the War of 1812, and Matthew Perry still eyed the British with suspicion.³⁵ Perry expressed his suspicions in a private memorandum to the Secretary of the Navy in May 1844. He was wary of Britain’s continued desire for a mutual right of search and believed they hid their true motives under the claim of slave trade suppression. But Perry lived up to his reputation for calm thoughtfulness and told the Secretary that he might have misjudged the British; his comments should remain confidential.³⁶ Perry met accusations of unwarranted British interference with American shipping, and despite his opinion developed a working relationship with his British counterparts. Nevertheless, British and American vessels

³³ BJL Archives, DDHO 10/3, Sir Charles Hotham, Letters from Lord Dundas, Lord Dundas to Charles Hotham, 31 October 1848.

³⁴ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 105, African Squadron, M.C. Perry to John Foote, 20 May 1844 and *H.R.Doc No. 104*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 21, M.C. Perry to Secretary of the Navy, 21 May 1844.

³⁵ Schroeder, *Matthew Calbraith Perry*, 116.

³⁶ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to Secretary of the Navy, “Private Memorandum of Commodore Perry addressed to the Hon[erable] Secretary of the Navy,” 21 May 1844.

rarely cruised in company, and “co-operation” was mostly restricted to intelligence sharing as the next best strategy.

The rules for sea power were most successful when American and British vessels cruised in company. The joint patrols that occurred South of the equator in 1850, for example, marked the first since the Tucker-Paine agreement for any extended period. The *Perry* cruised with the *Cyclops*, off Ambriz, in April and May 1850, with little tactical result. Meanwhile, the *John Adams*, cruising with the *Cyclops*, captured the American slaver *Excellent*. British Commodore Fanshawe exclaimed that it was the “first fruit of our renewed co-operation[.]”³⁷ But in the absence of joint cruising, the treaty provided an incentive for the British to find a US warship to handle a suspect ship, rather than board it and sour diplomatic relations.

In a speech to the American Colonisation Society, Andrew Hull Foote concluded that without the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, “British officers would not have gone in search of an American cruiser to report” suspected slavers.³⁸ In August 1844, for example, Commodore John Foote told Perry that he suspected the American vessel *Imogene* was a slaver. Perry thought it was prudent to investigate a report from the senior British officer.³⁹ But the most important dynamic of the Anglo-American relationship along the West African coast was conflict and its resolution. Up and down the “chain of command,” at the naval and political levels, Britons and Americans worked to mitigate their disputes over the application of sea power, rather than threaten Anglo-American relations further.

³⁷ Foote, *Africa and the American Flag*, 273-278 and 311-318 and NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 108, African Squadron, Arthur Fanshawe to Commodore Gregory, 17 May 1850.

³⁸ Foote, *African Squadron*, 5-6; Foote, *Africa and the American Flag*, 301-323; and NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 108, African Squadron, Andrew H. Foote to Commodore Francis H. Gregory, 14 September 1850.

³⁹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 105, African Squadron, M.C. Perry to John Y. Mason, 28 November 1844 with enclosures A and B.

Anglo-American Conflict along West Africa, 1840s and 1850s

Historians, like Robert L. Robinson, concluded that by the end of Perry's tenure the British were of little threat to the United States.⁴⁰ But Perry's successor, Skinner, believed that on the West African coast "we most frequently come in contact with our great commercial rival; here, under the pretext of ascertaining nationality, our vessels are liable to be boarded[.]"⁴¹ Americans became increasingly wary of British dominance along the coast. British treaty-making efforts, ostensibly to establish free trade, suppress the slave trade, and counter French moves, drew American suspicion. The Americans believed that other powers, especially the British, sought to carve up the African coast for their exclusive domain.

Perry, for instance, believed that only with diligence would the local people accept American goods, like cotton cloth. He opined that the British enjoyed a monopoly under the protection of the Royal Navy and the Americans "enjoy but a share of what is left[.]"⁴² Perry, as Hotham later concluded, also believed that the French were attempting to establish outposts along the African coast to annoy "the numerous American and English Merchant vessels that are constantly traversing the Northern and Southern Atlantic" in the event of war.⁴³ But the British counter-plan to French actions raised equal concern in American eyes.

They eyed the treaty-making commander Alexander Murray with suspicion when, in 1847, he and Governor Joseph Roberts of Liberia discussed British recognition of the colony's independence.⁴⁴ The Americans were also suspicious when Murray

⁴⁰ Robert L. Robinson, "Commodore Matthew C. Perry and the Protection of American Rights in West Africa, 1843-45," *Southern Quarterly*, 5:1 (1966): 63.

⁴¹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 106, African Squadron, no. 44, Chas. Wm. Skinner to George Bancroft, 15 December 1845.

⁴² NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to David Henshaw, 29 January 1844.

⁴³ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry, "Memorandum "AA" to accompany communication No. 76 to Navy Department," 18 November 1844.

⁴⁴ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 82 (pt.), African Squadron, Geo. C. Read to John Y.

arrived at Cape Palmas, near another American settlement, and also “engaged in making treaties with the native chiefs who owned the territory contiguous to the settlements in Liberia.”⁴⁵ A protectionist outlook coloured American naval reaction to the British, not understanding their true intentions. British actions in stopping American-flagged vessels, and her economic policy, contributed to the tension along the coast. But several incidents reveal that the nations, and their naval officers, sought to prevent relations from degenerating.

In early 1844, for example, the British stopped an American-flagged vessel, the *Roderick Dhu*, on suspicion of slaving. Perry exclaimed that the HMS *Spy* had passed the *Roderick Dhu* at a “cable’s length” and must have seen it was a legitimate trader. Perry reminded John Foote that it was unjust for the British to stop US-flagged vessels in international waters. He also reminded Foote that Britons were also involved in the slave trade; British goods found their way into the slave-trade cycle. But Perry biographer John H. Schroeder concluded that Perry “refused to let these exchanges escalate[,]” passed reports of problems with the British to Washington, and “let the matter stand.”⁴⁶ Perry moderated his views and confessed that Americans often sold ships into the slave trade and convicting them was difficult.⁴⁷

Foote also tempered his squadron’s use of sea power and told Perry that rather than board several suspected American slavers, like the barque *Eleanor*, he reported them to the Americans. Perry and Foote seemed to respond to each other’s desire for a cordial relationship. Perry told Foote that both governments were sincere in their goals. He trusted that the officers of both nations would emulate each other as their

Mason, 11 December 1846, Alex Murray to Governor Roberts, 8 December 1846, letter A, and Roberts to Captain Alex Murray, 10 December 1846, letter B, enclosures in Geo. C. Read to John Y. Mason, 11 December 1846.

⁴⁵ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 82 (pt.), African Squadron, Geo. C. Read to Jno. Y. Mason, 12 May 1847.

⁴⁶ Schroeder, *Matthew Calbraith Perry*, 118-119.

⁴⁷ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to John Foote, 4 March 1844.

governments had instructed, while “being careful not to interfere with the duties of each other.” Perry thanked Foote for the polite manner Foote supplied information, and wished him the best for his return to England.⁴⁸

But at the political level, both nations also used their officers as “scapegoats” to calm their diplomatic relations. From the British perspective, if the Americans made serious objections, London investigated and punished. Washington also reprimanded commodores they believed threatened Anglo-American relations. Captain P.C. Dumas, of the merchant ship *Cyrus*, for example, told the Secretary of the Navy that during a voyage to Cabinda in June 1844, the HMS *Alert* treated them like a pirate ship. A crew boarded without uniform under British officer C.J. Bosanquet, took the ship’s papers, and refused to give them back. Perry concluded that if the *Cyrus* was sold into the slave trade, then Bosanquet’s actions were justified.⁴⁹ Lord Aberdeen supported the officer, but told Ambassador McLane that Bosanquet was overzealous, and was disciplined. Consequently, Aberdeen hoped that the Americans would pursue it no further.⁵⁰

The decade closed along the West African coast with continued American objections to overzealous British officers. It led in late 1858, to London again reprimanding officers for the sake of Anglo-American relations. In September, for example, the Admiralty ordered the *Alecto* home after it seized the American-flagged vessel, *Caroline*, although London defended the actions of the officers against what they believed was a slaver.⁵¹ In 1859, the Americans accused the Royal Navy of telling US vessels they would be sent to the United States, tried as pirates and put to death if they kept flying the US flag. London doubted the claim, but to appease the Americans, the

⁴⁸ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to John Foote, 4 March 1844.

⁴⁹ NA, RG 45, Perry letter books, M.C. Perry to Commodore William Jones, 6 January 1845; IUP, vol. 29, Correspondence with British Commissioners Relative to the Slave Trade (Class A), 99-100 and 110-111, enclosures 209 and 233 in no. 9, P.C. Dumas to Secretary of the Navy, 15 August 1845 [misdated, actually 15 August 1844] and C.J. Bosanquet to Commodore Jones, 12 May 1845.

⁵⁰ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 5, Aberdeen to Louis McLane, 15 September 1845, enclosure in Louis McLane to James Buchanan, Secretary of State, 18 September 1845.

⁵¹ PRO, Adm 123/164, J.W. Grey to Secretary of the Admiralty, 13 November 1858.

Under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Seymore Fitzgerald, told the Admiralty. The Admiralty responded and warned its officers to make no such threats against US vessels, nor destroy evidence like US flags. They told Rear Admiral Frederick William Grey to “warn the officers under your command to guard against any just cause of complaint being given to the Government of the United States[.]”⁵²

The Americans exerted similar restraint over their officers. In late 1845, for example, the British accused the Americans of avoiding patrolling certain regions, like Cabinda. Commodore Skinner, upset, declared that he had sent the *Yorktown* there “to protect the American flag from violation” and that any foreign warship that visited American-flagged vessels did so at their peril.⁵³ But in Washington, Secretary of the Navy Mason wanted good Anglo-American relations maintained. He confided to Commodore Read, Skinner’s replacement, that the British Ambassador to Washington, and Lord Palmerston in London, were concerned about Skinner’s belligerent comment that further British action “may interrupt the harmony which happily exists between our respective Governments.” Therefore, Mason impressed on Read that “care must be taken to give no just cause for” complaint by London.⁵⁴

Along the West African coast, Britain and the United States shared intelligence and sometimes co-operated. Furthermore, for the sake of Anglo-American relations, they worked to contain potential conflicts and reduce tensions so that the separate objectives of each nation could continue. Officers with reputations for calm and reasoned decision-making were called upon while those who threatened peace were reprimanded, vessels recalled, and orders issued for both navies to be respectful toward

⁵² PRO, Adm 123/164, Seymore Fitzgerald, Foreign Office, to Secretary of the Admiralty, 30 April 1859 and Admiralty to Rear Admiral F.W. Grey, 4 May 1859.

⁵³ IUP, vol. 33, Correspondence with Foreign Powers (Class D – 1846), 124-127, enclosure 2; 3, and 4 in no. 77, Chas. Wm. Skinner to Commodore Jones, 4 November 1845, W. Jones to Commodore Skinner, 25 and 27 December 1845, and W. Jones to R.T. Lowry Corry [Secretary of the Admiralty], 31 December 1845.

⁵⁴ NA, RG 45, Secretary of the Navy Confidential Letters, Sept. 12, 1843 to Feb. 28, 1849, J.Y. Mason to Commodore Read, 16 November 1846.

each other. The use of sea power, navies and men, were a safety valve through which Anglo-American disputes could be contained. On the American side of the Atlantic, where the consequences of conflict had broader ramifications because of the closeness of sensitive American home waters, their naval relations also provided a release mechanism to reduce tensions when Anglo-American relations clashed.

Anglo-American Relations and Central America

Despite British influence over Belize and Superintendent Macdonald's activities, Washington remained unconcerned until Britain pursued Texas in its war against the slave trade, and when tensions between Mexico and America degenerated into war. On 18 October 1840, Palmerston told General J. Hamilton of Texas that Britain would recognise Texan independence if they entered into an agreement with the British for slave trade suppression. Palmerston's efforts proved futile and Texas was "annexed" in 1845.⁵⁵ Then, in December 1845, President James K. Polk warned European powers that an attempt at a "balance of power" strategy within North America was unacceptable. Under the fear of British influence in the region, New Granada, or Colombia, and the United States signed a treaty in 1846 that gave the United States the non-exclusive right to the Panama isthmus for lawful commerce.⁵⁶ The region was in turmoil in the wake of the collapse of the United Provinces. Soon, private American citizens, the filibusters, aided in the wars. With new American interest in the region, London realised that outstanding issues had to be settled with the co-operation of the only substantial power with interests in the region, the United States.

Palmerston, again in the Foreign Office by 1846, saw the ramifications of the American acquisition of California. In response, he extended the boundaries of British

⁵⁵ IUP, vol. 20, (Class D), 68-70, no. 84, Palmerston to General Hamilton, 18 October 1840. See also, Humphreys, *British Honduras*, 52.

⁵⁶ United States, *Congressional Globe*, 29th Cong., 1st sess., Appendix, 1-8, James K. Polk, "Message of the President of the United States," 2 December 1845. See also, Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 45-46 and 53-54 and Bemis, *Diplomatic History of the United States*, 244-246.

territories to control the San Juan River and potential transit route. The British, controlling a force of Mosquitans, took control of San Juan del Norte in 1848 and renamed it Greytown. The Americans failed to do anything overt to repel the British, but signed a treaty with the Nicaraguans giving the United States the exclusive right to build and protect a canal through nearby Nicaraguan territory. The British responded by signing a similar treaty with the Costa Ricans for the potential Greytown Atlantic terminus. But when the British negotiator convinced a local Royal Navy officer to seize Tigre Island on the Pacific Coast and run up the British flag, Palmerston disavowed the action.⁵⁷ Central America was becoming embroiled in a diplomatic game of chess that threatened Anglo-American relations.

Palmerston told Ambassador George Bancroft, former Secretary of the Navy, that Britain had no desire to exploit its Central American possessions; it had enough colonies already and Britain and the United States had common interests in the region. Bancroft remained wary, and Palmerston was suspicious of American talk of Manifest Destiny. He agreed to the seizure of San Juan simply to keep the Americans from securing a monopoly on a transit route. But *The Times* advised peaceful settlement of matters between all parties.⁵⁸ Bourne surmised that Palmerston knew he had to modify British strategy toward America because of the nation's growth from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Bourne concluded that "the best Britain could now do was very cautiously to contain the expansion of the United States into Central America and the Caribbean." The resulting compromise to allow America into the region, was the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. London sent Sir Henry Bulwer, a "friend and protégé of Palmerston's," to Washington to negotiate a settlement.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 51 and Bemis, *Diplomatic History of the United States*, 247-250.

⁵⁸ Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 68-74 and 80-109.

⁵⁹ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 56-60.

The free and open access philosophy that emerged over Anglo-American access to any isthmian transit route was similar to, and consistent with, Britain's West African policy. Rather than precipitate war, Britain sought equal access under the protection of naval power. The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty (1850) committed that neither would control, fortify, nor colonise in the isthmus. Secretary of State John M. Clayton and Sir Henry negotiated in a tense atmosphere as Americans still express discontent over Britain's Central American possessions. But after the treaty was signed, London's problem was how to implement the treaty while American expansionists roamed the isthmus. If the United States continued to actively pursue control of Central America, in violation of the newly signed treaty, it was difficult for the British to abandon her settlements. The result was a slow series of negotiations with Central American states, whereby British rights and honour were protected, while London transferred locations like the Mosquito Coast and Bay Islands back to Central American sovereignty.⁶⁰

The Filibusters

During the late 1840s, American commercial, territorial, and strategic interests focussed on the North American continent making America more sensitive to events in their home region. Many Americans coveted Cuba as a potential slave state, while the Central and Southern American states were weak and susceptible to anyone with scheming plans such as industrialists and filibusters who advocated the "Manifest Destiny" of American hegemony.⁶¹ Filibusters were Spanish-American nationalists and American expansionists who led private military expeditions against other nations, usually in Central and South America, using the United States as a base.⁶² America's

⁶⁰ Bemis, *Diplomatic History of the United States*, 249-250; Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 73-74 and 80-109; and Humphreys, *British Honduras*, 55-58.

⁶¹ Janice E. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 78 and 118-119.

⁶² Filibusters, originally from the Dutch term *vrijbuiter*; the free booty pirates (Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, 17-18).

interests in Central America are significant because it reveals the strategic importance that Americans placed in the region.

Such interests placed them in direct opposition to historical British interests. Consequently, London often feared that the filibuster expeditions were preludes to American annexation of strategically important islands, like Cuba, while the slave trade that continued from the island thwarted wider British economic goals. Nevertheless, British leaders believed that forceful action would simply drive the island into American hands. Furthermore, the regions farther South in Central America, were increasingly far from the public's interest. London was wary of war over minor disputes in distant regions and sought to pacify the Americans. Eventually, the Americans reciprocated and the US Navy and Royal Navy, while maintaining a watchful eye on each other, patrolled for filibusters who threatened their relations. Anglo-American tension escalated during the filibuster crisis, but rather than go to war, both nations showed restraint.

Filibuster raids from American territory into Cuba and Central America had been a problem since the 1840s. Expansionist Southerners called for the annexation of Cuba and its half-million slaves as a "good sort of population for a slave state." Contemporaneously, some Cuban whites were upset with the arbitrary rule of the Spanish Captain-General. The nexus of interests brewed conditions whereby Cuban nationalist filibusters, like Narciso López, although officially condemned by President Taylor, launched raids from the United States against Cuba. Southerners like Jefferson Davis, Calhoun, and locals around New Orleans supported them. But López's endeavours ended in August 1851, when Spanish authorities captured and executed him at Cuba.⁶³

The filibusters also raised concerns in France and Britain that the Americans, fresh from their territorial gains against Mexico, were bent on annexing Cuba. During the López expeditions, the governor of the Bahamas, John Gregory, remarked in June

⁶³ Bemis, *Diplomatic History of the United States*, 314-316.

1850 that if the Americans seized Cuba, it would be as significant as British possession of Gibraltar in the Mediterranean. It would give the Americans the power to lock up the trade of the Gulf. Palmerston agreed, but slavers continued to operate from Cuba, undermining British efforts to support Spain.⁶⁴ Palmerston felt able to take stronger actions farther South, with Brazil, but he also realised that because the Cuban upper class prospered from slavery, such a policy against Cuba might push them into American arms. Instead, Royal Navy vessels, such as *Trincomalee*, were diverted to Havana to protect British interests “and warn off American invasions, official or unofficial.”⁶⁵ When López’s operations continued, Britain and France united to preserve the status quo. The Admiralty ordered West Indian forces to “give Spain any assistance she required to defeat any future American filibustering expeditions against Cuba.” But by January 1852, the orders were rescinded when the threat declined.⁶⁶

Rather than push the Americans further, France and Britain suggested, as others had during the piracy crisis, an agreement to protect Cuba’s independence. The British believed that even if rejected, the offer would eliminate the US expansionist cry that Cuba was about to fall into British hands. President Fillmore and Secretary of State Webster wished to agree to the terms, but it was an election year. Fillmore lost the election and Webster died. Edward Everett, interim Secretary in the dying administration, noted the British and French assurances, and reiterated that the US had no desire to acquire Cuba. But he cautioned the other powers that it was a strategically important island along important trade routes.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Bemis concluded that Britain and America “let the matter drop.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 224-225 and fn. 60.

⁶⁵ Lambert, *Trincomalee*, 56-57.

⁶⁶ Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 227.

⁶⁷ Bemis, *Diplomatic History of the United States*, 317-319.

⁶⁸ Bemis, *Diplomatic History of the United States*, 319.

Tensions remained high between the nations, but they never went to war. Farther South, while America and Britain settled their differences over the Canal Zone, American industrialists, like Vanderbilt, continued activities. In 1853, Vanderbilt's Accessory Transit Company and Greytown disagreed over the placement of coal facilities. The latter destroyed some company buildings in protest and the US warship *Cyane* was dispatched. But Washington relinquished when it was revealed that the company violated agreements with Greytown.⁶⁹ In 1854, after a company captain killed an African citizen of Greytown, the residents pillaged company property. The *Cyane* was again dispatched. Her captain asked the commander of HMS *Bermuda* to intervene, but the latter simply protested "the contemplated bombardment" of the town. Faced with no response from Greytown, the *Cyane* bombarded the town on 13 July, the *Bermuda* observing events. In America, Congress demanded answers.⁷⁰

President Franklin Pierce told Congress that the *Cyane* was ordered to show restraint, had paused between salvos, and "there was no destruction of life." The people of Greytown, "blacks and persons of mixed blood[,] were no better than pirates. While there were protests from London, it was more complaints "of harshness than of justice." Furthermore, Pierce implied, the British had bombarded communities less offensive than Greytown "with much greater severity, and where not cities only have been laid in ruins, but human life has been recklessly sacrificed, and the blood of the innocent made profusely to mingle with that of the guilty."⁷¹ In response, while upset, London avoided military confrontation over the incident. The British were embroiled in the Crimean War and the London *Globe* declared that aboriginal rights were too insignificant for war

⁶⁹ Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 171-174.

⁷⁰ United States, *Senate Journal*, 33rd Cong., 2nd sess., 28 July 1854 and President Franklin Pierce to US Congress, 4 December 1854, in *Senate Journal*, 4 December 1854.

⁷¹ United States, *Senate Journal*, 33rd Cong., 2nd sess., President Franklin Pierce to US Congress, 4 December 1854.

with America.⁷²

Instead, by the 1850s, the conflict avoidance and resolution strategy that used sea power modifications prevented war. The operations of the Central American filibusters also became embroiled in the commercial rivalries, working with rival parties for control of the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua.⁷³ The presence of these filibusters hurt Anglo-American talks over implementing the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. Pierce's administration had prosecuted British agents who had recruited for the Crimean War within the United States; he had to act against US citizens undertaking similar activities or face renewed criticism from London. While little could be done about the commercial rivalries, the US Navy was dispatched to stop filibusters, while the Royal Navy stood watch, ready to protect British citizens.⁷⁴

Pierce warned American citizens against filibustering and disavowed the local US representative's premature recognition of the new Nicaraguan government, headed by filibuster William Walker. In the midst of the Kansas-Nebraska controversy⁷⁵ over the extension of slavery, Northerners hardly wanted Southern expansion into Central America.⁷⁶ But the British were wary of American activities and feared that Washington secretly supported Walker as a means to control the Central American isthmus. In

⁷² Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 174-186.

⁷³ Vanderbilt wanted a fast steamer, the *Prometheus*, to run from New York to San Juan del Norte, while the 1,000-ton steamer *Pacific* would run from San Juan del Sur to San Francisco, and other vessels would run the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua. He created the American Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company then spun off its Nicaraguan operations into the Accessory Transit Company. For details of how Vanderbilt and his rivals Charles Morgan, Cornelius K. Garrison, Edmund Randolph and Alexander P. Crittenden, used the conflict in wrestling for control of isthmus shipping, see Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, 240-243, 320-321, 352-355 and 378-380.

⁷⁴ The Neutrality Act of 1794, and subsequent laws consolidated in the Neutrality Act of 1818, forbade US citizens from serving in foreign services, outfitting armed vessels within the United States for the use of a "foreign belligerent" or against anyone with whom the United States was at peace (Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*, 78 and 118-119).

⁷⁵ The Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed in 1854 and allowed for citizens of Kansas and Nebraska to decide if they wanted slavery in their regions. But Nebraska also bordered on Iowa, a stronghold of Northern antislavery activists.

⁷⁶ Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*, 127-128 and Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 189-191 and 194-197.

response, by July 1856, London dispatched ten warships to Greytown “as a reminder to Walker (and to the United States) [parentheses in original] of British Power until his collapse[.]” Walker was president of Nicaragua by June, and led by Costa Rica, the Central American states went to war with Nicaragua to oust the foreigner.⁷⁷

President Pierce publicly condemned filibuster activities in 1856, but also warned that the isthmus was as important to Washington as the Suez to “the maritime Powers of Europe[.]” But he wanted free and open access for all nations and was disappointed when Britain seized San Juan del Norte and renamed it Greytown.⁷⁸ Once Walker was ousted, the naval strategy was to patrol for any renewed filibuster activity that threatened to upset the region and Anglo-American relations. The USS *St. Mary's*, Charles Henry Davis commanding, was dispatched to San Juan del Sur on the Pacific coast to prevent Walker and his forces from interfering with American interests. Walker launched several other expeditions, and each time tried to evade detection. But Americans increasingly saw Walker as a fanatic and few objected when Honduras executed him.⁷⁹

Democrat James Buchanan, the next President, also condemned filibuster activities and wanted good relations with Britain, and, now, peaceful American expansion.⁸⁰ He told Congress that filibuster expeditions interfered with Washington’s desire for free access to the isthmus. He declared that “[w]e desire, as the leading Power on this continent, to open, and . . . protect every transit route across the isthmus, not

⁷⁷ Francis X. Holbrook, “The Navy’s Cross – William Walker,” *Military Affairs*, 39:4 (1975): 198 and Williams, *Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy*, 200-201 and 211.

⁷⁸ Britain, *BFSP*, vol. 47, 1856-1857, Franklin Pierce to the Senate and House of Representatives, 15 May 1856.

⁷⁹ Holbrook, “The Navy’s Cross,” 119-201 and Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, 418 and 451-457.

⁸⁰ Bemis, *Diplomatic History of the United States*, 327-330; John Bassett More, (ed.), *The Works of James Buchanan: Comprising his Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence*, 12 vols. (New York: Antiquarian Press, Ltd., 1960), vol. 10, 103, James Buchanan to Lord Clarendon, 23 February 1857; and Frederick Moore Binder, *James Buchanan and the American Empire* (Selensgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1994), 221-225.

only for our own benefit, but that of the world[.]”⁸¹ To maintain the route’s neutrality, Washington encouraged the Central American states to settle with Britain. Therefore, treaties were signed between Britain and Honduras on 28 November 1859 and with Nicaragua on 28 January 1860. British settler rights were respected on the Bay Islands, while Britain agreed to release its protectorate into Nicaraguan sovereignty.⁸² Washington’s policy is significant because they worked to calm rivalries while British and American naval officers agreed to leave disputes to the diplomats. Britain and the United States maintained an uneasy peace, while naval forces patrolled for those who might upset it. War would have disrupted the wider interests of both nations.

Accommodation and Policing the Equatorial Atlantic

With the renewed strategic sensitivity of Western waters for American shipping between the Atlantic and Pacific, Royal Navy seizures of American-flagged slavers also contributed to heightened tensions. But the British handled the crisis as they had the Central American issue; London saw no point in war with the United States over the slave trade. The Gulf of Mexico was different than West Africa, and Britain modified its naval policy in the former to reduce Anglo-American tension. By 1858, the Law Officers of the Crown solidified British naval strategy: it was best to police the slave trade along the African coast, away from the legitimate trade of commercial rivals. Meanwhile, because of the Royal Navy seizures, the Americans agreed by 1859 to dispatch a stronger naval force of steamers to the Gulf of Mexico and to the West African coast, ostensibly to patrol for slavers. Many in the US believed that Britain had no right to stop US-flagged ships near US waters, but they also admitted fault for failing to suppress the slave trade. Both nations modified their sea power policies as a method to accommodate each other and reduce diplomatic tensions.

⁸¹ United States, *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 216-217, James Buchanan to the Senate of the United States, 7 January 1858.

⁸² Williams, *Isthmian Diplomacy*, 212-223 and 227-266.

Some studies claim a deliberate British naval “build-up” to pressure the Americans into action against the slave trade, but there is little evidence, beyond American opinion at the time, to support this claim.⁸³ With the increased Cuban slave trade by 1857, the British dispatched four additional gunboats to Cuban waters to assist the Spanish authorities police the slave trade. But at the urging of the Law Officers of the Crown, the gunboats were ordered to only stop slavers without papers or flags. Over the spring of 1858, the gunboats captured 2 slavers, later condemned in Vice-Admiralty courts, but in the process they also stopped 61 American vessels. Nevertheless, London reined in the navy when it threatened to drag Britain into an unwanted war with the United States. After American protests, Lord Malmesbury, Foreign Secretary, told Parliament that the dispatch of the gunboats was poor judgement and British efforts should have remained on Africa.⁸⁴

The American press, diplomats, and politicians condemned Britain’s right of search, but it raised particular concern with incidents on the American side of the Atlantic. After several American ships were stopped near US coastal waters in 1858, the *New York Times* demanded that the government stop the slave trade to placate the British. But it also believed that Washington needed to act against the “the British fleet” whose actions seemed part of “some preconcerted [British] schemes which require further explanation[.]”⁸⁵ In London, Ambassador Dallas provided the British with several examples from both sides of the Atlantic that showed Royal Navy activities interfered with American trade.

The warship *Styx*, he noted, reportedly stopped an American vessel carrying wood from Jamaica to New York in March. Meanwhile, at least three American vessels were boarded at Sagra La Grande and inspected by a British warship, probably the

⁸³ For example, see Appendix: Piracy and Slave Trade Studies, and Harmon, “Suppress and Protect,” 136-138 and McNeilly, “United States Navy,” 209-210.

⁸⁴ Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 262-264.

⁸⁵ *The New York Times*, 20 April 1858, 4, column 5 and 13 May 1858, 8, columns 4 and 5.

steamer *Buzzard*; the Americans also reported numerous other incidents, particularly in the Gulf of Mexico.⁸⁶ In response, Dallas believed the United States should abandon the 1842 treaty, but President Buchanan now believed otherwise. Instead, in May 1858, he asked Congress for more power to increase the strength of the US squadron in the Gulf of Mexico “and confront the British when they halt American ships at sea.”⁸⁷

In Congress, many emphasised British interference with American coastal trade. Democratic Senator Robert Toombs, Georgia, for example, exclaimed that the Constitution protected Americans from such searchers in their own homes. Yet, Britain “without any forms of law” claimed a similar right “in the Gulf of Mexico at our own doors” and it was an act of war.⁸⁸ But some echoed the *New York Times* and believed they should listen to the British and stop the slave trade. Soulsby concluded that Senator Stephen Douglas, Democrat from Illinois, “followed the traditional Western attitude of extreme hostility” toward the British.⁸⁹ But in reality he appreciated American culpability. Douglas demanded that Washington address London’s concerns and send better warships to the West African and Cuban coasts to suppress the slave trade. Nevertheless, Douglas declared that the government must first focus on commerce protection in the Gulf of Mexico.⁹⁰

Despite British claims that they issued orders to their ships to stop harassing American-flagged vessels, the acts had continued and stirred political and public outrage in the United States.⁹¹ Therefore, Congress gave the President the power to

⁸⁶ PRO, Adm 1/5699, Dallas to Earl of Malmesbury, 7 July 1858.

⁸⁷ United States, *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 2495-2496, Senate, 29 May 1858.

⁸⁸ United States, *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 2495-2496, Senate, 29 May 1858.

⁸⁹ Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 159-160.

⁹⁰ United States, *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 2496-2498, Senate, 29 May 1858 and Binder, *James Buchanan*, 261-262.

⁹¹ Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 165.

act.⁹² Under these circumstances, the navy dispatched a force into the Caribbean headed by Flag Officer Edward McCluney. But the status of the coastwise American slave trade was nebulous and American efforts to seal their Southern coast met with a lack of Federal commitment.⁹³ In London, on 31 May 1858, Ambassador Dallas told Lord Malmesbury that British actions around Cuba, the Gulf of Mexico, and off the West African coast were “sudden and seemingly systematised assaults” on American commerce. Dallas told Washington that Malmesbury seemed impressed by the ambassador’s urgent briefing; the issue receiving press in the *London Times* of that morning. It declared that Britain would be equally upset if the US Navy had committed such acts against British-flagged vessels.⁹⁴

Britain was willing to settle the dispute rather than risk war with the United States over an issue that was largely the cause of Northern abolitionists. Dallas reported that “I have the assurance of the leading men among the [free trade] Radicals that they are averse to this system of meddling with the rights and business of others[.]”⁹⁵ Meanwhile, on 2 June 1858, British Ambassador Lord Napier told Secretary of State Lewis Cass that London would not “sanction or support any system of supervision over the traders of the US in the narrow seas almost within sight of their own shores.” The reason, Napier confided to Lord Malmesbury, was that London would not let Northern crusaders push London into war.⁹⁶ In July, Hutt tried to capitalise on the diplomatic dispute and again called for the African squadron to be disbanded. But again “Tories

⁹² United States, *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 2496-2498, Senate, 29 May 1858 and Binder, *James Buchanan*, 261-262.

⁹³ McNeilly, “United States Navy,” 210-211; Harmon, “Suppress and Protect,” 136-138; Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, 161; and Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 148, 152 and 154.

⁹⁴ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 104, G.M. Dallas to Lewis Cass, 1 June 1858.

⁹⁵ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 106, G.M. Dallas to Lewis Cass, 4 June 1858.

⁹⁶ PRO, Adm 1/5699, Napier to Earl of Malmesbury, 7 June 1858.

and Whigs combined” and defeated his motion 223 to 24.⁹⁷ Regardless, in response to American protests, London reined in warships and hoped that the powers could develop procedures for nationality identification and search.⁹⁸

The Crown Law Officers clarified Royal Navy procedures to avoid conflict and restrict naval activity to the African coast. They concluded that naval actions in the “Bights of Benin or Biafra, will be subject to very different [strategic] considerations [than] if attempted in the Florida Gulf Stream” where there was heavy legitimate commercial traffic.⁹⁹ Consequently, on station, over summer 1858, British Commodore Kellett replied to American representatives that he had ordered a stop to searches and the withdraw of his forces from Cuban waters.¹⁰⁰ Farther South, Captain W. Cornwallis Aldham, HMS *Valorous*, at Greytown, told Commodore McIntosh, the US commodore, that the British had the right to search any vessels at Greytown, which was a British protectorate. On 11 November 1858, the British received reports of filibusters in the area and questioned vessels for information. McIntosh protested that he saw no difference in searching American ships for “ ‘Filibusters’ or Africans[.]” But it was not worth a confrontation and, as off West Africa, they concluded that diplomats, rather broadsides, should settled such disputes.¹⁰¹

As the incidents continued, by June 1859, Washington sent war steamers (see below, table 8.1) to the Gulf of Mexico and the West African coast.¹⁰² The squadron

⁹⁷ Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 266.

⁹⁸ Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 163.

⁹⁹ PRO, Adm 123/167, J.D. Harding, Fitzroy Kelly, and H.M. Cairus [illegible], to Earl of Malmesbury, 16 June 1858.

¹⁰⁰ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 102, Home Squadron, Jas. McIntosh to Commander C.H.A.H. Kennedy, 18 June 1858 and Jas. McIntosh to Isaac Toucey, 12 July 1858.

¹⁰¹ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 102, Home Squadron, W. Cornwallis Aldham to James McIntosh, 28 November 1858, Jas. McIntosh to Sir W.C. Aldham, 26 November 1858, Jas. McIntosh to Sir W.C. Aldham, 29 November 1858, W. Cornwallis Aldham to Jas. McIntosh, 30 November 1858 and Jas. McIntosh to Isaac Toucey, 3 December 1858.

¹⁰² The vessels were originally meant to confront Paraguay. In 1855, Paraguay fired at the US warship *Water Witch* while it conducted scientific research. In 1858, the Americans dispatched a

around the Americas was to protect “trade and commerce, and to resist the unlawful search or seizure of American vessels[.]” The force was also “to arrest and prevent all unlawful expeditions from the United States” to Central America that threatened regional stability.¹⁰³

Table 8.1 US Navy Deployment to West Africa and the Gulf of Mexico

Station	Name	Propulsion	Guns
Africa	<i>San Jacinto</i>	Steam Propeller	17
	<i>Mohican</i>	Steam Propeller	7
	<i>Sumter</i>	Steam Propeller	6
	<i>Mystic</i>	Steam Propeller	6
	4 vessels total		36 guns total
Gulf of Mexico	<i>Fulton</i>	Side Wheel Steamer	4
	<i>Crusader</i>	Steam Propeller	6
	<i>Wyandotte</i>	Steam Propeller	6
	<i>Mohawk</i>	Steam Propeller	6
	<i>Water Witch</i>	Side Wheel Steamer	3
	5 vessels total		25 guns total

Source: PRO, Adm 123/164, enclosure in Lyons to Lord John Russell, 21 July 1859.

But Cass also assured Lord Lyons that the Cuban force would look for slavers and intercept those that “may escape the vigilance” off Africa.¹⁰⁴ As off West Africa, the Royal Navy would no longer have to interfere in American rights. Rather than go to war, both sides settled their dispute by modifying the use of their navies. Further talks stalled, and Cass refused to attend an international conference in London on the right of

commissioner, 2500 sailors, and nineteen warships, to “settle” outstanding issues between the countries. Paraguay capitulated, apologised for the attack and signed a commerce and friendship treaty (Binder, *James Buchanan*, 259-261).

¹⁰³ United States, *Congressional Globe*, 36th Cong., 1st sess., Appendix, 15, Isaac Toucey, “Report of the Secretary of the Navy,” 2 December 1859 and Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 59. Earl E. McNeilly deemed the subsequent West African deployment of some of these vessels as the “Buchanan Offensive.” But his chronology was blurred and he failed to consider that the first, 1858, deployment of US naval forces was for filibuster patrols (McNeilly, “United States Navy,” 204-230).

¹⁰⁴ PRO, Adm 123/164, Lewis Cass to Lord Lyons, 7 June 1859 and Lyons to Lord John Russell, 21 July 1859; and United States, *Congressional Globe*, 36th Cong., 1st sess., Appendix, 13, Isaac Toucey, “Report of the Secretary of the Navy,” 2 December 1859.

search.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey told African commodore William Inman that joint cruising was “highly desirable” and Washington was “sincerely desirous” to end the slave trade and prevent interference with American-flagged ships.¹⁰⁶

Over 1860, the task of the British and American commanders was clear. When Anglo-American economic interests were threatened, the navies even co-operated. In February 1860, for example, trading company agents wanted protection and asked the British and American navies for help. The US warship *Marion*, with men from the British warship *Falcon* provided protection for the two British factories. When an attack came, the Anglo-American force formed a defensive line and detached a unit towards the natives, who then fled. The Americans concluded that “our force and that of the English ... co-operated in concert & harmony.”¹⁰⁷ As Anglo-American tensions eased co-operative efforts occurred. But with the outbreak of the Civil War, complications arose. With slavery as a war-rallying cry, Washington believed that if the Royal Navy policed the slave trade, it would help the blockade against the Confederates.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Britain remained wary, and again avoided becoming embroiled in war.

The Civil War and American capitulation

In Britain, the coming of the Civil War was uncertain as it seemed more likely that the US would continue its Southern enlargement. Palmerston tolerated the United States and believed that its expansion South would provide regional stability and a people with

¹⁰⁵ Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 173.

¹⁰⁶ PRO, Adm 123/164, Isaac Toucey to Captain William Inman, 6 July 1859, enclosure in [Admiralty] to [Rear Admiral Grey, Cape of Good Hope], 5 August 1859.

¹⁰⁷ NA, RG 45, Squadron Letters, vol. 114, Thomas W. Brent to Wm. Inman, 6 March 1860, enclosure in Wm. Inman to Isaac Toucey, 28 July 1860.

¹⁰⁸ Lincoln blockaded the South's coast and it received recognition from Britain. But the US Navy had to reorganise its force, purchase idle merchant vessels, and start construction of new vessels to make the blockade effective (William M. Fowler, Jr., *Under Two Flags: The American Navy in the Civil War* [New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990], 39-59).

a “gentlemanly” ethos with whom Britain could deal. Furthermore, if the United States grew South, it reduced the possibility that she would attempt intrigues against Canada. Steele concluded that “the second Palmerston government, like the preceding Tory administration, carried appeasement of the United States to lengths scarcely imaginable[.]”¹⁰⁹ The Confederate States caused a problem for Britain and the Foreign Office told the Admiralty to act with caution. But a cautious approach again best suited British designs.

The Law Officers concluded that if the British seized Southern-flagged ships, delivered intelligence to US Navy ships about them, or co-operated in their seizure, it might violate British neutrality laws. The Admiralty feared being drawn into the conflict and modified its strategy accordingly. London declared neutrality and the Royal Navy ceased sharing intelligence with the US Navy.¹¹⁰ However, in November 1861, the US warship *San Jacinto*, recently withdrawn from Africa, boarded the British mail steamer *Trent* and took two Confederate representatives, en route to Britain, into custody.

The *Trent* affair epitomised Anglo-American maritime relations during the post-1812 era. Charles Francis Adams, American ambassador to London, concluded that for “centuries” British policy toward the sea was “dictatorial, and especially towards the United States[.]”¹¹¹ Yet now the Americans had boarded a British ship. The British prepared for war and ordered Lord Lyons, in Washington, to prepare to come home with “the archives of his office[.]” Meanwhile, the Admiralty ordered Rear Admiral Baldwin Walker, on the African coast, to prepare to protect commerce and destroy enemy trade. By 15 January 1862, Walker dispatched the warship *Penguin* with orders to

¹⁰⁹ Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, 292-293.

¹¹⁰ PRO, Adm 123/166, Wodehouse to Admiralty, 28 February 1861; PRO, Adm 123/167, J.D. Harding, Richard Bethell and [illegible], Law Officers, to Earl Russell, E. Hammond, Foreign Office, to Secretary of the Admiralty, 16 and 17 May 1861 and Romaine, Admiralty, to Rear Admiral Sir B. Walker, 18 May 1861.

¹¹¹ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 67, Charles Francis Adams to Earl Russell, 6 November 1861, enclosure in Charles Francis Adams to William H. Seward, 8 November 1861.

commanders to immediately attack Americans on the African coast upon notice of war.¹¹² But diplomatic events overtook Walker.

Palmerston believed that anti-British sentiment in America left Lincoln and Secretary of State William H. Seward with little manoeuvring room. But Ernest N. Paolino concluded that Seward, an advocate of American expansion, believed in co-operation with other powers, and force only when needed, to further American interests like in the Pacific after the Civil War. With American naval resources devoted to the Civil War, and the virtual abandonment of the West African coast, Seward also gave way to Civil War pragmatism. Washington granted London the mutual right of search they long desired so that British sea power might increase the effectiveness of the blockade on the South. Finally, Britain's unease about Canada, its trade with the North, and Washington's concern about fighting a two-front war, combined with French support for Britain, to also help settle the affair.¹¹³

Therefore, on 13 November 1861, Lyons and Seward signed an informal memorandum of understanding. British and American cruisers were permitted to stop, search, and detain each other's ships within thirty leagues of the West African coast.¹¹⁴ Soulsby believed the agreement was a "war-time measure" to gain European support for the North while freeing US Navy resources for use against the South.¹¹⁵ The agreement was ratified on 20 May 1862 as the Anglo-American Treaty (1862), virtually identical

¹¹² PRO, Adm 123/166, Romaine to Rear Admiral Baldwin Walker, 4 December 1861, Paget, Admiralty, to Rear Admiral Sir Baldwin Walker, or Senior Officer at Sierra Leone, 18 December 1861 and B.W. Walker to Captain Alan Gardner, 15 January 1862.

¹¹³ Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, 297, Ernest N. Paolino, *The Foundations of the American Empire: William Henry Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1973), 32 and 145, and Arthur Power Dudden, *The American Pacific: From the Old China Trade to the Present* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 60-61.

¹¹⁴ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 82, Charles Francis Adams to William H. Seward, 3 December 1861, no. 95, Charles Francis Adams to William H. Seward, 27 December 1861, and no. 97, Charles Francis Adams to William H. Seward, 2 January 1862; PRO, Adm 123/166, Lyons to Earl Russell, 13 November 1861 and Lyons and Wm. H. Seward, "Informal Memorandum," 13 November 1861.

¹¹⁵ Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 174.

to the Quintuple Treaty that the Americans had earlier rejected.¹¹⁶ Where once Americans objected to British actions, Seward also now hoped that “foreign” fleets in the Gulf would “employ not only additional influence, but also additional force in suppressing the slave trade[.]”¹¹⁷

London had experience with operations in such a volatile region. Lord John Russell, Palmerston’s Foreign Secretary, was wary about the “complications that might” ensue if the British attempted to “[v]erify the character of vessels” around Cuba even if authorised by Washington. Therefore, the British stayed clear of the war and focussed their efforts on the West African coast.¹¹⁸ But to prevent a potential future crisis, London and Washington made one final agreement over the application of sea power. To prevent unintended seizures, the British planned to issue passports, signed by a British government minister, to vessels involved in legitimate voyages, such as the transportation of free Africans. Washington agreed to do the same and by September, the British and American Mixed Commission courts at the Cape of Good Hope, Sierra Leone, and New York, were prepared to receive captured vessels.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

In the end, Palmerston worked to further British objectives, while avoiding war with the

¹¹⁶ PRO, Adm 123/166, C. Paget, Admiralty, to A.H. Layard, Foreign Office, 16 January 1862; Lyons to Earl Russell, letter one, 11 February 1862, [illegible, by Admiralty Office] to Rear Admiral Sir Baldwin Walker, 5 June 1862 and NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 163, Charles Francis Adams to William H. Seward, 22 May 1862.

¹¹⁷ NA, RG 59, Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906, Great Britain, no. 169, William H. Seward to Charles Francis Adams, 24 January 1862.

¹¹⁸ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 116, Charles Francis Adams to William H. Seward, 18 February 1862.

¹¹⁹ NA, RG 59, Dispatches, Britain, no. 191, Russell to Charles Francis Adams, [17] July 1862, in Charles Francis Adams to William H. Seward, 18 July 1862; PRO, Adm 123/166, E. Hammond, Foreign Office, to Secretary of the Admiralty, 18 September 1861; PRO, Adm 123/167, Charles F. Adams to Earl Russell, 22 August 1862, Romaine, Admiralty, to Rear Admiral Sir Baldwin Walker, 27 August 1862, S. Walcott, Emigration Office, to Sir Frederic Rogers, Colonial Office, 2 September 1862, Robert Phillemore, Law Officers of the Crown, to Earl Russell, 25 September 1862, and E. Hammond to Secretary of the Admiralty, 4 October 1862.

United States. Although he wanted an independent South for British economic and strategic interests, he reconciled that with his desire to end the slave trade. He realised that the British public would never sanction an end to the Civil War that allowed slavery to continue. Furthermore, when the Confederates began buying British built ships, after the initial *Alabama* controversy, London bought Southern vessels that were under construction at Mersey, rather than face more protests from Washington.¹²⁰ Along the equatorial Atlantic, from the West African coast to slaver and filibuster patrols along Central America, the United States and Britain worked to reduce tensions, maintain the balance of power, and prevent future conflicts. They modified their use of sea power, and set conditions on its application, so they could pursue their separate objectives for the equatorial Atlantic while avoiding war with each other.

¹²⁰ Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, 298-301.

Conclusion: Sea Power and the Equatorial Atlantic, 1819-1863

From 1819 to 1863, Britain and the United States used sea power in the equatorial Atlantic tactically and strategically. Tactically, they hunted pirates and slavers, depending on their level of political commitment. Strategically, both deployed their navies to protect and promote commerce and check the activities of other nations. The British had clear objectives, backed by unified support from the government and commercial class. In contrast, American policy could only focus on commercial affairs until the Civil War dealt domestic slavery a blow. When their separate, tactical, uses of sea power conflicted with their other goals, it generated Anglo-American tension. But as Britain and the United States wished to pursue their objectives and avoid war with each other, this common philosophy allowed sea power to be a mechanism to reduce the tension in their relationship. To accommodate each other, they modified its use.

British gentlemanly capitalism, humanitarianism, and liberalism formed a nexus with emerging American commercial goals and allowed peaceful use of sea power. Through this device, Britain and America related, furthered their clashing interests and avoided war. They tried to co-operate over divisive issues, like slave trade suppression, reined in naval officers who threatened Anglo-American relations, and deployed those who were more diplomatic than confrontational. Anglo-American naval relations in the equatorial Atlantic reveal that the nations were neither friends, nor enemies. Instead, their relationship was dynamic as each avoided conflict that would disrupt their wider interests. This study therefore clarifies the nature of that relationship during the early nineteenth century and contributes to the wider field of Anglo-American relations' studies.

Bourne concluded in his study of Anglo-American relations on the North American continent, for example, that each nation was suspicious of the other.¹ This suspicion percolated into their diplomatic and naval relations over piracy and slave trade

¹ Bourne, *Balance of Power in North America*, 3-10.

suppression. American suspicion of Britain was greatest over slave trade suppression because of the contentious nature of slavery in the United States and America's fear that British naval efforts interfered with American commercial endeavours. Meanwhile, British fears of American motives, in particular in the Gulf of Mexico and Central America, were illustrated by British unease over the US Navy deployment to fight pirates and filibusters. Anglo-American mistrust often clouded their naval relations in the equatorial Atlantic. Matzke concluded that the Royal Navy was a warning to America to contain her passions.² But those in power in both nations wished to avoid war. Sea power allowed "peaceful" communication of their policies, and objections, and gave each the opportunity to modify the behaviour that the other disliked.

Lambert describes the Royal Navy, in particular between the Crimean and First World Wars, as "the world's most powerful political instrument[.]"³ But Richmond concluded that rivalries harmed the effectiveness of sea power. Athens, for example, reached the height of power, but then fell for "want of a wise policy of mutual support and mutual sacrifice in the maintenance of her sea power."⁴ An opposite dynamic occurred during the early nineteenth century. This study revealed that London believed that it was better to further objectives peacefully than face war with other nations. Britain found that rather than drive the US from the sea, it needed co-operation with the United States to further goals like piracy and slave trade suppression, and the development of the equatorial Atlantic.

The British gentlemanly capitalist ideal, the free trade mentality, and liberalism, combined during this period with traditional strategic objectives – countering French moves and protecting West Indian interests – to mould British naval policy and relations with the United States. Cain and Hopkins, and their "gentlemanly capitalist" thesis,

² Matzke, "Britain Gets Its Way," 19.

³ Lambert, *Foundations*, 12.

⁴ Richmond, *Sea Power in the Modern World*, 20-21.

have been criticised for coming too close to seeing “ ‘Great Britain’, ‘the USA’ or the whole of ‘the City of London’ as if these were organic entities making a decision or advocating a particular line of action.”⁵ But this analysis revealed that throughout the British system, from Whitehall, the Admiralty and its officers, and representatives in the regions, Britons worked to further overall national goals in the equatorial Atlantic while they avoided provoking interference by other nations.

Canning, for example, worked to secure British interests with the rebel Spanish-American states, but only when the time was “ripe.” In turn, the Royal Navy was deployed at the insistence of pressure from home to protect British commercial interests. Meanwhile, the humanitarian goal of slave trade suppression combined with the desire to further economic growth, and shaped British naval policy along the West African coast. The British sought to move African production factors into expanding, two-way, legitimate commerce, and maintain peace with other nation-states. Although the Cain and Hopkins’s model is controversial for the era of imperial decline⁶, it holds for the narrower era under consideration in this work. It helps provide an explanation for one component of the dynamic of Anglo-American relations in the early nineteenth century. For the gentlemanly capitalists and their allies, war would undermine the peaceful development of overseas trade. Consequently, sea power had its limits.

The combined political objectives and philosophies limited the extent to which Britain would use sea power against other nation-states, like the United States, to compel them to do her bidding. Of the nineteenth century, Hobsbawm concluded that “the British government rarely lost its cool ... Diplomacy, the ‘great game’ between secret agents, even the occasional war, were not confused with the apocalypse.”⁷ This was also true in her naval relations with the United States. British policy makers

⁵ Dumett, “Exploring the Cain/Hopkins Paradigm,” 11.

⁶ Dumett, “Exploring the Cain/Hopkins Paradigm,” 25-37.

⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 259.

avoided all-out war that was in no one's interests, as when disputes arose over the right of search, especially close to American shores in the 1850s.

The United States developed its naval policy from a different perspective, but the result was the same, a desire to avoid conflict. During the piracy crisis, the Monroe administration deployed forces to the Gulf of Mexico to protect trade. Others in the administration, like Thompson, were concerned about strategic over-stretch if they also deployed forces to the West African coast to meet Britain's slave trade suppression demands. Nevertheless, they tried to appease the British and convince them that they were acting against the slave trade. Similarly, during the 1840s, as the potential for American economic expansion overseas grew, leaders like Upshur and Webster agreed that sea power was important to nurture those interests. But they also realised that co-operation with Britain was important to keep the Royal Navy from interfering with American shipping. As Buchanan, Cass, and Seward learned, such "appeasement" was critical to solve access disputes over the Central American isthmus and to keep Britain out of the Civil War.

Therefore, this study advances the wider field of Anglo-American relations' studies that has operated along a continuum of extremes. At one pole, the British and Americans were enemies with a gradually formed friendship. At the opposite, they were friends whose disputes were anomalies as each learned to relate to one another after the Revolutionary War. Instead, a comparative approach revealed that British and American naval relations, moulded by their underlying political policies, kept the lines of communication open between them. They managed disputes through modifications to naval policy to address, as least temporarily, the concerns expressed by the offended party. In this way, the wider commercial and strategic objectives of both nations could continue. Most previous studies have sought to explain how similar or different

historical Anglo-American relations are to today's special friendship.⁸ Few have endeavoured to explain the relationship beyond this paradigm.

Crawford, however, revealed that conduits communicated each nation's views of the other. His study of *The Times* of London and its close connection with the political elite revealed that misunderstandings accumulated when communications were one way. Britain relied more on newspaper accounts from the North than the South. But with the Civil War, the South became upset when Britain failed to support their cause on economic grounds, like cotton supply. The North became disillusioned when Britain declared neutrality despite her support for anti-slavery. In turn, *Times'* editorials objected to Lincoln's emancipation plans, continued to attack the North, yet was subdued in its coverage of the *Trent* affair. Crawford concluded that while the British were ideologically close to the South, they increasingly identified more with the "rapidly industrializing, bourgeois North, the power of cotton, the transitory lure of free trade, and the mythical 'cavalier' spirit notwithstanding."⁹

Certainly, an additional conduit in the Anglo-American relationship was required to aid this identity connection during this period and release accumulated tension. The sea provided one such interface between Britain and America. Both nations worked to maintain two-way "communication" along this conduit and solve their diplomatic disputes. Therefore, this study revealed, Britain and America were not friends, but they kept their relationship from spiralling into war. Nevertheless, for this period, their philosophy was intended to further their separate interests, rather for the altruistic goal of a "special" relationship.

Through the conduit of the sea, the "dialectical process" that Gelber postulated conditioned Anglo-American relations. He concluded that "the English-speaking peoples diverge and then, on a new plane, reconcile clashing interests for the sake of a

⁸ See this study's Chapter One, 10-15.

⁹ Crawford, *Anglo-American Crisis*, 3-5, 13-14 and 135-138.

still higher common interest.”¹⁰ In this case, their “common interest” was furthering their own separate objectives. Both used sea power for trade protection, but also realised that it could support long-term commercial expansion; reconciling their differences was to their mutual advantage. Interest groups – merchants like Hoffman, the gentlemanly capitalists and the Lords, and anti-slave traders like Wilberforce, Buxton and the ACS – demanded their governments use sea power to support long-term policy. Liberalism and the rise of free trade in Britain, and leaders like Palmerston, Peel, Upshur and Webster, then facilitated the use of sea power to further these long-term goals and avoid war.

In this context, this study also opens several avenues of further research. The analysis could be expanded geographically to assess Anglo-American relations in the Pacific during this period. Arthur Dudden, for example, recognises British, French, and American rivalry there, in particular over Hawaii. In December 1842, President Tyler warned the other powers against annexing Hawaii. Later, in 1843, the HMS *Carysfort*, commanded by Lord George Paulet, declared the Sandwich Islands a British protectorate. But London, as in the regions in my study, “repudiated Paulet’s brash act” for the sake of diplomatic relations.¹¹ During the 1850s, London also feared US filibuster raids against Hawaii and *Trincomalee* was often at the islands as deterrence.¹² Furthermore, during the Crimean War, Gough concluded that Britain again feared a coalition of her enemies, this time Russia aided by American privateers outfitted in California. Consequently, Rear Admiral David Price dispatched *Artemise* and *Amphitrite* to California to defend British interests.¹³

Further work could also broaden the academy’s understanding temporally into the post-Civil War period and the controversial era of British imperial decline. In 1898,

¹⁰ Gelber, *America in Britain’s Place*, 14.

¹¹ Dudden, *American Pacific*, 58-59.

¹² Lambert, *Trincomalee*, 94-95.

¹³ Barry M. Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1914: A Study of British Maritime Ascendancy* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1971), 114.

Yerxa, for example, concluded that Britain was forced to withdraw from the Caribbean when its forces were needed closer to home waters to counter the German threat.¹⁴ After the Civil War, the United States turned inward and became a stronger federal state. In the Eastern equatorial Atlantic, the scramble for Africa began. In Europe, Bismarck used the military to establish the German Empire. Imlah concluded that he renewed "the notion that war could be a useful and profitable instrument of national policy." Consequently, nations retrenched under protectionism and growing conscript armies. London remained the financial centre of the world, but Berlin the focus.¹⁵ But what occurred in Anglo-American naval relations between 1865 and Yerxa's era?

Because of the socio-economic changes that occurred during the nineteenth century, historians can also advance the social history of naval officers. Lewis, for example, analysed the British naval officer class and concluded that it had to be created. Medieval thought reasoned that Britain needed those of the "higher classes" for military leadership; simple seamen were inadequate.¹⁶ Cain and Hopkins, and others, surmised a "nexus" between the gentlemanly capitalists directing the "economics and politics of the empire" and the "command hierarchies of both the army and navy[.]"¹⁷ This study strengthens this theory. Officers like Rowley, son of a naval officer, were wary that the West Indies squadron would be stretched if it met more demands from

¹⁴ Donald A. Yerxa, *Admirals and Empire: The United States Navy and the Caribbean, 1898-1945* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 5-6. For their relations in the Pacific, see Hugh B. Hammett, "The Cleveland Administration and Anglo-American Naval Friction in Hawaii, 1893-1894," *Military Affairs*, 1976 40(1): 27-32.

¹⁵ Imlah, *Economic Elements in the Pax Britannica*, 17-19.

¹⁶ Michael Lewis, *England's Sea-Officers: The Story of the Naval Profession* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1939, reprint 1948), 34-41. Although dealing with officers and men, the tradition continued with Lewis, *A Social History of the Navy, 1793-1815* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960), Christopher Lloyd, *The British Seamen, 1200-1860: A Social Survey* (London: Collins, 1968), and N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Collins, 1986). More recent studies, for example, include Brian Vale, "Appointment, Promotion and 'Interest' in the British South America Squadron, 1821-3," *Mariner's Mirror* 88:1 (February 2002): 61-68 and Gregory C. Kennedy, "Britain's Policy-Making Elite, the Naval Disarmament Puzzle, and Public Opinion, 1927-1932," *Albion* 26: 4 (Winter 1994): 623-643.

¹⁷ Dumett, "Exploring the Cain/Hopkins Paradigm," 40 and fn. 66.

merchants. In contrast, the ruling elite selected officers like Hotham, with his aristocratic Yorkshire connections, for their ability to relate diplomatically with other powers to further British strategic and commercial goals.

Meanwhile, my previous work revealed that the background of US officers evolved over 1845 to 1861 to include more from the commercial class.¹⁸ Yet Karsten revealed that US officers, like Academy Superintendent Louis Goldsborough and Alfred Thayer Mahan, son of the army's Professor Mahan, despised merchants. Goldsborough believed they were greedy. Mahan, the prophet of US naval expansion, held "the Academy disdain for those who 'attach to the making and having [of] money' a value in excess of what Mahan thought proper."¹⁹ Views opposite the British gentlemanly capitalists, some American politicians and some fellow officers. Yet, despite personal opinions on slavery, the navy supported commercial endeavours and officers, like Mayo, offered opinions on economic development. Clearly, the attitude of US officers reflected the changing American society. An important aspect of comparative analysis would be to assess what impact class connections and education had on professional beliefs over the nineteenth century as nations rose and economies changed. A "paired study" of Britain and America, with different dominant or rising classes, would highlight any trends.²⁰

¹⁸ Hunter, "Naval Academy and its Youth," Chapters Three and Four. See also, Hunter, "Youth, Law, and Discipline at the US Naval Academy, 1845-1861," *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord*, 10:2 (April 2000): 23-39.

¹⁹ Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism* (New York: The Free Press, 1972), 186-189. For a similar study, see Christopher McKee, *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creation of the U.S. Naval Officer Corps, 1794-1815* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991). McKee used "gentlemanly" as a descriptor for the officers. He concluded that the US Navy developed a good officer corps because it selected good men from the beginning and moulded them to the navy's requirements. Most midshipmen in the pre-1815 navy were from maritime regions, had a family maritime tradition, but although from the "middle class" they were financially insecure. Still, most obtained midshipmen appointments through immediate family political and naval connections (McKee, xi-112).

²⁰ Dealing with the twentieth century, such a study is Dirk Bönker, "Naval Professionalism and the State in Turn-of-the-Century Germany and America," in William M. McBride and Eric P. Reed, (eds.), *New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Thirteenth Naval History Symposium* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 111-138. Bönker concluded that German and American officers "pursued comparable domestic agendas predicated on the creation of an autonomous

National goals shaped the individual differences behind applying sea power in the equatorial Atlantic. These differences then fomented Anglo-American conflict when the opposing views of the “interest aggregations” clashed. Nevertheless, both nations believed that they could use sea power to further their economic objectives peacefully. The American strategy to use their navy to nurture and protect trade, and Britain’s pragmatic liberalism, allowed sea power to be a mechanism of accommodation in their relationship. Because of their grander objectives, London and Washington were able to maintain peace between their nations. Their wider strategies meant that when tensions mounted they modified their use of sea power to accommodate each other, while each furthered their separate goals. In the Anglo-American relationship, both were realists, pragmatists, and possibly opportunists, rather than friends.

politico-institutional space beyond any serious civilian control” (Bönker, 111). Meanwhile, R.L. Davison, protégé of Barry Gough, is discovering a conservative Royal Navy officer class confronting the decline of empire and its ramifications for the officer class and its political connections (Davison, “The Dismissal of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe December 1917 – A Naval Revolution,” paper presented to the Society for Military History, Knoxville, TN, 3 May 2003).

Appendix: Piracy and Slave Trade Studies

My study revealed that navies played a role in Anglo-American relations in the equatorial Atlantic. Naval relations provided a mechanism through which London and Washington related and reduced tensions rather than go to war. Jan Glete concluded that during the nineteenth century navies were involved in several interrelated tasks associated with national interests: piracy suppression, responding to attacks on Western interests and property, and slave trade suppression.¹ By their nature, issues involving piracy and the slave trade dealt with the national economic and strategic concerns of several maritime nations, in particular Britain and the United States. This study added to the academy's understanding of piracy and slave trade suppression. Furthermore, the analysis of how the United States and Britain formulated policy regarding these issues, in a geographically contiguous zone, revealed the role of sea power in furthering economic goals and in the Anglo-American relationship.

Within this context, piracy and slave trade studies have neglected what British and American policies, and their use of sea power, reveal about Anglo-American relations in the early nineteenth century. Paul Kennedy analysed economic change, but its ramifications on international maritime relations were only that many powers were sceptical of Britain's free trade mentality.² Even for him, piracy suppression was just another duty of the Royal Navy to free "the seas for trade[.]" Meanwhile, despite his claim that the Royal Navy was used to enforce an informal empire and support free trade, he made little of its West African activities. He concluded that British problems were "as much a comment upon the obstructionism of other governments and the cunning of the slavers as upon the effectiveness of British sea power."³ Beyond Britain's fear of the rise of general American and French naval power, naval relations

¹ Glete, *Navies and Nations*, 419, 442-443 and 475.

² Kennedy, *British Naval Mastery*, 152.

³ Kennedy, *British Naval Mastery*, 164-165.

during this period were not his concern.⁴ Specific piracy and slave trade studies also suffer from a lack of analysis linking naval and Anglo-American relations.

But connecting the geopolitical asides and the political and economic analysis established by the fields of piracy and slave trade studies revealed their potential as evidence in an analysis of international relations. Robert Ritchie (1986), in his study of Captain Kidd, remarked that as the Atlantic economy expanded, and goods became more readily available, pirate activities conflicted with national goals. Consequently, Britain began policing the piracy that hurt its trade. The British established Vice-Admiralty courts, put pirates on trial, and provided the Royal Navy with rewards for pirate captures.⁵ Meanwhile, Marcus Rediker (1987), although studying pirate life, concluded that authorities began policing pirates because they had established themselves in opposition to the interests of the ascending capitalist society.⁶ Finally, Janice E. Thomson (1994) offers the most theoretical illumination of how piracy shaped international relations, in a wide study of numerous "non-state actors," including those on land and sea. She concluded that the state wrestled control of violence away from these non-state actors because of pressure from other states to control the violent and private actions of citizens.⁷

Several other authors have also analysed the circumstances surrounding the rise and fall of piracy that are useful because they reveal a relationship between political problems, economic interests, and policing the seas. Jenifer Marx (1992) studied piracy

⁴ Kennedy, *British Naval Mastery*, 157.

⁵ Robert Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1986), 12. See also, Ritchie, "Government Measures against Pirates and Privateering in the Atlantic Area, 1750-1850," in David J. Starkey, E.S. van Eyck van Heslinga, and J.A. de Moor, (eds.), *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 10-28. But Ritchie deals almost exclusively with the eighteenth century and concludes with the "end" of privateering after the Crimean War.

⁶ Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 261-262.

⁷ Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*, 4-20.

from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. She opined that piracy arose during times of political upheaval and weak law enforcement.⁸ Basil Lubbock's work (1993) on piracy and slave trade suppression is incomplete notes and preliminary conclusions. But he believed that piracy ended around Cuba in the nineteenth century only when the Royal and United States Navies squeezed the island from both ends.⁹ David J. Starkey (1994), J.L. Anderson (1995), and Richard Pennell (1995) have focused on the economic and political factors that gave rise to piracy. Anderson divided piracy into three forms: part of the local economic system (intrinsic); connected with the degree of trade (parasitic); and connected with trade disruption (episodic).¹⁰ Meanwhile, Pennell discussed Spain's political and economic weakness, use of privateers, and how they undertook "unauthorised" or "pirate" actions.¹¹

But Starkey analysed the relationship between changing market conditions, the role of the state, and the occurrences of piracy. He divided piracy into five long and short waves. The long waves were a result of "chronic deficiencies" in North African and Caribbean economies, while the short waves occurred largely because of the "oversupply in the market for seafarers" after the major wars of 1603, 1714 and 1815. Starkey analysed pirates in terms of the microeconomics of business: the supply and demand of goods and services. He concluded that piracy occurs when there is market disequilibria, in particular an oversupply of seafaring labour. To gain employment, these seafarers entered piracy and flooded the market with cheap pirated goods. The supply of cheap pirated goods "to buyers" in an "alternative market" from that to which the goods were originally intended sustained the demand for piracy. Until the economy reallocated

⁸ Marx, *Pirates and Privateers of the Caribbean*, 1 and 284-291.

⁹ Basil Lubbock, *Cruisers, Corsairs & Slavers: An Account of the Suppression of the Picaroon, Pirate & Slaver by the Royal Navy during the 19th Century* (Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, Ltd., 1993), v-10 and 86.

¹⁰ Anderson, "Piracy and World History," 180-194.

¹¹ Pennell, "State Power in a Chronically Weak State" 353-355 and 368-372.

the “production factors,” and the labour market returned to equilibrium, this trend continued. Meanwhile, the state supported “piracy” when it too consumed their services and authorised or condoned attacks on a rival’s commerce. Consequently, Starkey concluded that piracy arose “when substantial disequilibria emerge between the demand and supply of commodities, military services and the production factors of shippers.”¹²

Starkey’s theory is significant because of its explanation for the decline of piracy and accompanying state intervention with sea power to police the “marketplace.” The state, consumers, and merchants supported pirate activities when there was demand-supply disequilibria. During times of disequilibria, piracy filled the gap between supply and demand for goods and seafaring labour. Slowly, during such short waves of piracy as occurred after 1815, legitimate commerce began to fulfil the needs of consumers and the labour-market oversupply was cleared. Piracy declined as the equilibrium was restored, then in the interest of the merchant and state interest-aggregation “the violence of the courts and the navy were deployed to eliminate pirates” from the competition.¹³ My study revealed that sea power was used in peacetime, against piracy and the slave trade, when it met the demands of the nexus of government and private interests to further their economic goals. Therefore, the reaction of the state and those interests to piracy and the slave trade illuminated their objectives and relationships with other nations, in particular commercial rivals in the same region.

The state of slave trade suppression historiography is similar to that of piracy. Recent literature has focused largely on the abolition movement or the actual slave trade, rather than slave trade suppression. Nonetheless, several authors have discussed the role of the slave trade in the Atlantic economy, a zone where the economic interests of several nations have traditionally met. Joseph C. Miller (1988) postulated that the slave trade became part of the West African economy in the form of reciprocity in

¹² Starkey, “Pirates and Markets,” 59-61.

¹³ Starkey, “Pirates and Markets,” 61, 71 and 77-78.

human beings. He focussed on the role of the slave trade in the African economy and how it became integrated with the Atlantic economy.¹⁴ Other authors have focussed on the British abolition movement. Seymour Drescher (1987) believed that ideas were important in ending the slave trade because it was an economic endeavour that brought enough benefits to those who utilised it.¹⁵

In contrast, David Eltis (1987) drew the most significant conclusions related to economic beliefs and policy making. He opined that a fundamental belief in the free-labour market guided British leaders more than any moral outrage against slavery. While the slave trade was economically beneficial to Britain, the upper class determined policy. Among them were Lord Stanley, who authored the Emancipation Act that freed slaves in the West Indies, and a range of political leaders from Lord Aberdeen, to Lord Palmerston, and Lord John Russell. Eltis conducted a basic statistical analysis of Royal Navy West African deployment. At its peak, he found that Britain devoted about 15% of her total warships to slave trade suppression, but the commitment varied. It was reduced, for example, when ships were needed during the Crimean War.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Eltis offered little further link between policy, naval deployment, and Anglo-American relations, thus providing an avenue of further research.

Specific naval slave trade suppression studies have been limited to a small number of works by several naval historians. As with piracy studies, these works focus almost exclusively on the suppression policies and practices of one country, the United States or Britain. There is little policy comparison let alone any systematic attempt to use comparisons to illustrate the dynamics of sea power and the Anglo-American relationship. Christopher Lloyd (1949) and W.E.F. Ward (1969) wrote the two major

¹⁴ Miller, *Way of Death*, 6-7.

¹⁵ Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 5. Thomas also opined that philosophical beliefs, like those of the Quakers, were important in establishing the abolition movement, while the press was important in propagating those ideas (Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 459-471).

¹⁶ Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 4-18 and 91-94.

works on Royal Navy efforts against the slave trade. Lloyd believed that diplomatic constraints hampered the Royal Navy's effort, but he mentioned only briefly the United States.¹⁷ Ward focussed his study on repeated encounters between the Royal Navy and slavers. He concluded that Royal Navy efforts were impaired by Foreign Office failures to secure suppression agreements with other countries. But Anglo-American diplomatic and naval interaction was not the focus of his study.¹⁸ Both Lloyd and Ward depict Americans as guilty, corrupt, or simply indifferent parties.

American slave trade suppression studies suffer from a similar dearth of analysis. American studies deal exclusively with the US Navy with only minor remarks about relations with the Royal Navy. Some American authors concede the role trade played in creating the US West African squadron in 1842. For example, George M. Brooke, Jr., implied in an article (1961) that trade was the primary American goal, and American naval commanders sought to "stimulate" American-African trade, but he failed to elaborate.¹⁹ As with their British counterparts, most American authors seek to analyse American naval deployment from the perspective of its success or failure at slave trade suppression, rather than draw broader conclusions about sea power and the Anglo-American relationship.

The exception is John H. Schroeder's biography of Matthew Perry. It includes a chapter about younger Perry on patrol in the West Indies for pirates and about his brief trips to Africa in the 1820s. In the separate chapter on Perry's West African command, Schroeder notes that Perry was suspicious of the British because of his experience during the War of 1812, but he was able to relate cordially with his British counterpart. Nevertheless, the work is a standard American naval biography and says little about

¹⁷ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 12, 63-65 and 182.

¹⁸ Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, 100, 161 and 277. A newer work on Royal Navy actions against the slavers is by Raymond Howell, *The Royal Navy and the Slave Trade* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), but his work focuses on the East African slave trade.

¹⁹ George M. Brooke, Jr., "The Role of the United States Navy in the Suppression of the African Slave Trade," *American Neptune*, 21:1 (1961): 28-41.

Anglo-American relations, how the nations co-existed, or avoided war. As with most stories of Perry, the focus leads to his “opening” of Japan.²⁰

Nevertheless, from the American naval perspective, two PhD dissertations offer the best analysis of American West African naval activity. Earl E. McNeilly (1973) concluded that the American squadron was ineffectual because of the lack of congressional support. McNeilly mentioned Anglo-American relations briefly, but only commented that Anglo-American co-operation was at its height and most effective after the outbreak of the Civil War.²¹ Judd Scott Harmon’s dissertation (1977) examines the US Navy’s efforts to suppress the slave trade in the equatorial Atlantic. He concluded that American suppression efforts were a successful by-product of commerce protection, but he offered little insight into the latter policy. While mentioning the Royal Navy, Harmon offered little comparison beyond a contrast of Royal and US Navy capture ratios. Based largely on this evidence, he concluded that the US Navy was as effective as the Royal Navy, but Harmon’s study failed to illuminate any trends in Anglo-American relations or sea power.²² Significantly, this study countered many of these and other conclusions.

While other authors have largely ignored Anglo-American relations and naval deployment, Hugh Soulsby (1933) studied slave trade suppression within the context of Anglo-American relations, but he relegated naval deployment and relations to secondary analytical importance. Nonetheless, he concluded that the White House, under the influence of John Quincy Adams, was unyielding in its belief that the British had no right to search American-flagged vessels for any reason. The American West

²⁰ Schroeder, *Matthew Calbraith Perry*, 22-42 and 95-122. Samuel Eliot Morison included one chapter on the American West African squadron in his biography of Perry. But Morison focussed on Perry’s mediation efforts between American colonists and natives, while Anglo-American relations were mentioned only briefly (*“Old Bruin” Commodore Matthew C. Perry: 1794-1858* [Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1967], 163-178).

²¹ McNeilly, “United States Navy,” ix-x and 240-242.

²² Harmon, “Suppress and Protect,” 110-142 and 204-210.

African squadron was meant to eliminate Britain's need to stop American-flagged vessels.²³ Robert L. Robinson (1966) offers the only significant comment on what naval deployment against the slave trade revealed about Anglo-American relations, but for the narrow 1843-45 period. He concluded that Anglo-American naval relations were initially cool along West Africa because the Americans were suspicious of the British. Yet, by the end of Matthew Perry's tenure, Robinson believed, the British offered no threat to American interests.²⁴ This study also proved this notion incorrect.

Previous studies have contributed little to the understanding of Anglo-American naval relations over slave trade suppression and the few conclusions that they have drawn have often been misleading. Soulsby, for example, failed to link broader issues beyond slave trade suppression in his discussion of the debates in Congress over Anglo-American tension in the Gulf of Mexico in the late 1850s. Consequently, he made inaccurate remarks about this critical crisis.²⁵ The period 1857-1858, for example, is more complex than other authors believe because they failed to consider the interaction of Anglo-American relations, the West African and West Indies theatres. Therefore, this study offered a substantial contribution to this phase in Anglo-American diplomatic and naval relations. Furthermore, it revealed that naval relations were a conduit in Anglo-American diplomacy and conflict avoidance.

In the naval realm, Harmon and McNeilly, for example, claim a deliberate British naval build-up in the West Indies, in the late 1850s, in response to the poor suppression efforts of the United States.²⁶ Yet Lloyd remarked that by 1858, the Cuban slave trade was growing to such an extent the Americans had to do something to control it and they suggested that the British become more involved around Spanish

²³ Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 27-37, 88-93 and 159-160.

²⁴ Robinson, "Matthew C. Perry," 47-51.

²⁵ Soulsby, *Right of Search*, 159-160 (see this study, Chapter Eight, 250).

²⁶ Harmon, "Suppress and Protect," 136-138 and McNeilly, "United States Navy," 209-210.

territories.²⁷ But Lloyd did not cite his sources, nor does he discuss the mechanics of Anglo-American diplomatic and naval relations during that period for that region. Meanwhile, the resulting American deployment after 1858 has led other historians to make several unsubstantiated conclusions.

McNeilly, for example, contradicted Lloyd, and believed that the Americans responded to the so-called British build-up and deployed naval reinforcements, which he called the “Buchanan Offensive.”²⁸ Klein further confuses the issue by claiming that in 1859 the US Navy actually joined “the British patrols in the Caribbean, though initially they could only seize ships carrying slaves.”²⁹ I could not assess Klein’s source because his work does not contain footnotes. Meanwhile, I showed that McNeilly misunderstood the nature of the US naval deployment in the late-1850s because he was too focussed on slave trade suppression as the sole determining factor. It was meant to stop filibusters, slavers, and the British. But Ward avoids the subject altogether and moves from the British seizure of Lagos (1851) to Lincoln’s emancipation proclamation.³⁰ Only Murray (1980), admits that the British “build-up” was simply four gunboats.³¹

Early in the research design for this study, I discovered these seeming contradictions and sought to explain them. I combed primary sources at the Public Record Office, London, and the National Archives, Washington, in search of evidence of a deliberate British naval build-up in 1858, followed by a specific American naval response, and any subsequent co-operation. Instead, I discovered overzealous Royal Navy officers on both sides of the Atlantic, with London almost on a weekly basis ordering them to stop searching American-flagged vessels. Meanwhile, the minimal

²⁷ Lloyd, *Navy and the Slave Trade*, 170.

²⁸ See McNeilly, “United States Navy,” Chapter Six.

²⁹ Klein, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 191. In fairness to Klien, his work is a textbook that covers a long period.

³⁰ See Ward, *Royal Navy and the Slavers*, Chapters Nine and Ten.

American naval activity occurred largely to stop private American citizens – filibusters – from waging private wars in Central America that threatened peace and stability. There was no Anglo-American naval co-operation in the Caribbean during 1859 as Klein implied. This study showed that Anglo-American interests clashed resulting in no substantial co-operation. Both nations sought to reduce tensions generated between their naval forces. London realised that it was dangerous to use sea power close to America's shores, while with the Civil War, Washington believed that British sea power might check Southern slavers.

The problems in the historiography are caused by studies conducted without considering the broader temporal or geographic contexts. Anglo-American interests overlapped regarding piracy, a threat to both their traders, although tension remained. As with their relationship during the war on piracy, Anglo-American relations were strained over slave trade suppression, but they fell short of war. Britain had banned slavery and the slave trade, and combined its suppression with other objectives, while the United States maintained separate strategies for the slave trade and furthering their commercial interests. But rather than spark war, Britain and the United States often rearranged their naval forces and maritime policies in hope of minimising the potential for conflict. The issues of piracy and slave trade suppression therefore provided an important point of comparison for how nations use navies to implement national policy and relate with one another in the same region.

³¹ Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 262-263.

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